

Honda to launch 800cc bike by March 2009

Honda Motorcycles and Scooters India (HMSI) will introduce an 800cc bike by the end of this financial year, a senior executive of the company told reporters here Monday while unveiling a new model.

HMSI president and chief executive S. Aoyama said the 800cc bike would be one of the two models planned for launch later this year; the other could be either a bike or a scooter.

These would be in addition to the Aviator scooter and the 125cc motorcycle CBF Stunner launched at the Auto Expo 2008 here Monday.

"When we introduced motorcycles in India, we started with smaller engine sizes to cater to the masses. We have been exploring launching bigger motorcycles and this year an 800cc bike will be launched for the Indian market," he said.

HMSI, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Honda Motor Co., entered India with its Active scooter in 2000.

'The 800cc bike will be imported from the parent company,' Aoyama told IANS.

Company executives refused to divulge details about the second product to be launched this financial year.

'It is too early to disclose if the other product will be a scooter or a bike,' HMSI sales and marketing head N.K. Rattan said.

The company is also planning to introduce a 100cc motorcycle, which Aoyama said will be in the market by 2010.

Prior to HMSI, Honda had its presence in the country through the joint ventures Hero Honda, Honda Siel Cars India, and the erstwhile Kinetic Honda company.

The company sold 907,000 units in the financial year 2007-08, clocking a growth of 27 percent over the 715,000 units sold in 2006-07.

It has now targeted sales of one million scooters and bikes this fiscal. The HMSI plant in Manesar, Gurgaon, has a capacity of 1.1 million units annually, which Aoyama said goes up to 1.3-1.4 million with "enhanced productivity".

"We have a target of one million units in sales this year with a split of 700,000 scooters and 300,000 motorcycles," he said.

"Although we have reached our capacity in the existing plant, we have not made any plans for expansion or setting up a new facility yet," Aoyama added.

The new bike - 'CBF Stunner' - is a 125cc offering from Honda complementing its existing model 'Shine' in the same category. The bike will be targeted at the 18-25 age group.

"The USP of the CBF is its looks and styling combined with affordability and a great mileage," Rattan said.

The motorcycle will have integrated front body cowl and will run on an 11 bhp engine with five-speed transmission. The bike will sport tubeless tyres for both front and back wheels and buyers will have the option to go for 240 mm hydraulic front disc brakes as well drum brakes.

The kick-start model with drum brakes will cost Rs.47,070 ex-showroom in Delhi, and the high-end model with disc brakes and self-start will be priced Rs.51.655.

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