

Lower Saxony's Prime Minister Wulff visits Volkswagen plant in Pune / India

The Prime Minister of the State of Lower Saxony, Christian Wulff, visited the Volkswagen plant nearing completion in Pune (some 150 kilometers south east of [Mumbai](#) / India) last Saturday (October 4, 2008).

Together with a delegation of approximately 70 high-ranking business representatives from northern Germany who are currently on an information tour of India and China, he was greeted by Prof. Jochem Heizmann, Member of the Board of Management of Volkswagen AG with responsibility for 'Group Production'.

According to Heizmann, 'India is an important growth market of major significance for the Volkswagen Group's global strategy. The models we manufacture in India lay the foundation for our presence in key segments of the Indian automotive market.' In his welcome address, Prime Minister Wulff said 'Lower Saxony is proud of Volkswagen and the contribution the company is making all over the world. Our best wishes go to Volkswagen employees and management for swift growth in India, too.'

The Volkswagen Group is represented in India by its Skoda, Audi and Volkswagen brands. Skoda has been present on the Indian market since 2001 and operates an assembly plant in Aurangabad (some 250 kilometers north east of Mumbai) which builds the Skoda Superb, Laura, Octavia and Fabia as well as the Audi A6 and A4 and the Volkswagen Passat and Jetta. Audi entered the Indian market in 2005, and today's product offering not only includes the A6 and A4, but also the A8, Q7 and TT models. Volkswagen moved into the Indian market with the launch of the Passat in September 2007 and today also offers the Phaeton, Touareg and Jetta. Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles is currently preparing its market entry. During the first nine months of this year, Skoda, Audi and Volkswagen delivered 15,232 vehicles to customers in India. This represents an increase of 6,265 units or exactly 70 percent compared with the same period in 2007.

As Prime Minister Wulff commented, 'Volkswagen's commitment in India underlines the long-term aim to become the world's number 1 in the automotive industry.' Wolfsburg's Mayor Rolf Schnellecke, who also accompanied the delegation, expressed his 'great respect' for Volkswagen's achievements in India and emphasized that building the plant in Pune 'not only brings new jobs locally, but also safeguards jobs in Wolfsburg' and handed over a helmet plate of Wolfsburg to Joerg Mueller, President and Managing Director of Volkswagen Group India.

The Volkswagen plant in Pune is a core element of the Volkswagen strategy and at the same time a symbol of the company's commitment in India. A production plant with an annual capacity of approximately 110,000 vehicles and a high level of vertical integration plus extensive local sourcing is being built on a site covering approximately 30 hectares. Investment totals 580 million euros, currently the largest investment by a German company in India. The plant will also employ some 2,500 people, primarily recruited from the region, and Volkswagen is thus also demonstrating its affinity with its new location.

The Pune plant will open in spring 2009 - one year earlier than originally planned. To begin with the factory will build the Skoda Fabia, with a new hatchback developed on the basis of the Polo following in the first half of 2010 and a sedan to be added a little later.

'The vehicles built in Pune are exclusively destined for the Indian market,' Prof. Jochem Heizmann explained. 'We are aiming for a market share in India on a par with our world market share which is currently roughly 10 percent. To achieve this we need to move forward swiftly and effectively with the expansion of our dealer network.' Volkswagen plans to increase the number of dealers from the present ten to approximately 50 by the end of 2009. Heizmann added: 'Setting up production and expanding the dealer network must proceed hand-in hand and step-by-step. Product, dealer and service quality must be high. Volkswagen already enjoys a good reputation in India today.'

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