

Amby gears up for Europe trip

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New Delhi, July 25: Hindustan Motors plans to export the Ambassador to Europe.

The Birla group auto maker wants to cash in on a recent poll conducted by *Top Gear*, a BBC-owned car magazine, which voted the Ambassador the world's best taxi.

Uttam Bose, chief executive officer and managing director of Hindustan Motors Ltd (HM), said the response from the European market was encouraging.

"There is a demand for the Ambassador as well as other HM vehicles in Europe. We have started exports to Bangladesh and Nigeria. We can soon start exports to Europe as well," Bose told **The Telegraph**.

In some ways, it would be going back to the roots as the Ambassador was modelled on British auto maker Morris's Oxford cars. However, Morris engineers from the 1960s would probably not be able to recognise the new Amby which had undergone changes in its engine, electrical harnesses, gears and safety features.

Analysts say the passenger car with vintage looks can be a hit with the Europeans. A small number of the Ambassador is sold in the British market and a marketing drive could push sales in the continent.

Hind Motors plans to focus on expansion and sales, which are stalled because of emission issues. The company was unable to sell the Ambassador in



Bose: Expanding horizon

many cities since 2010 because its engine did not meet emission standards.

The company has now received the much-awaited certification from the Automotive Research Association of India for its new BS-IV compliant engine.

"We have demolished the myth that we cannot upgrade engines. We expect our sales to grow significantly within a few months," Bose said.

"We will expand in a phased manner. In the taxi market, we have always been a market leader. We will now start selling in 17 new cities and will take the car to the tier-III and IV cities and markets that have still not been explored," he added.

The company has capacity to produce 20,000 vehicles a year at its Uttarpara plant in Bengal.

It is confident of competing with the Tatas and Maruti, which have the IndiGo and the Eeco, respectively, in the taxi segment.

"We are not worried about competition from the Tatas or

Maruti as we are the market leader in this segment. We will soon start selling the BS-IV compliant cars in metros," he added.

Bose believes the new fuel-efficient engine will give stiff competition to other auto majors.

The company will also ramp up production of its light commercial vehicle (LCV) in the next quarter.

"At present, we produce 400-500 vehicles, including the Ambassador and LCV Winner. By the next quarter, we will increase it to 1,000 vehicles a month," he said.

The company manufactures the Ambassador, the Winner and auto components at its Uttarpara plant. It also makes the Winner at Pithampur in Madhya Pradesh.