

Mitsubishi readying small car, DNA, March 13

Mitsubishi Motors, Japanese vehicle maker, launched its new sports utility vehicle (SUV), Pajero Sport, on Monday with an aim to sell about 5,000 units in the first year and double that figure in a couple of years.

The company is also looking at a small-car launch in India.

The vehicle will be initially imported as a fully built unit from Mitsubishi's Thailand unit and will be assembled from the completely knocked down form at Hindustan Motors' Tiruvallur plant near Chennai from September. The company will tie up with equipment manufacturers prior to assembling the SUV.

Once the cost comes down, the prices are expected to come down from its ex-showroom price of Rs23.53 lakh, Delhi, the company said. Hindustan Motors, which markets Mitsubishi vehicles in India, is currently investing around Rs50 crore in its Chennai facility. On plans to enter the small-car market, Mitsubishi Motors Corporation Japan executive officer and corporate general manager of Asia and Asean, Masahiko Ueki, said, "We would also like to join that segment at some point of time in future". He plans to get the service network in place before introducing small cars.

The company may consider launching its new global hatchback in India. This car will be powered by a 1.2-litre petrol engine and will be first launched in Thailand this year. It is considering setting up more facilities in Southeast Asia and India is also on the radar. The company is also looking at bringing in smaller sedans.

On whether the company will go solo or with Hindustan Motors on small cars, he said, "Going on our own is also an option...we have many options and we are exploring all of them at the moment."

Ueki said, "Using HM's Chennai plant for manufacturing the small car is also an option".

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