

Mitsubishi eyes small car market

Our Bureau

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Mitsubishi Motors could be the next carmaker to join the burgeoning domestic small car market. A new model called 'Mirage' is being considered for India, which will go on sale next month in Thailand, powered by a 1.2-litre engine.

For the highly competitive segment, which would require significantly larger investments, the Japanese firm may choose to go solo. Currently, it assembles and markets vehicles in India under a tie-up with the Kolkata-based Hindustan Motors.

"We have a global hatchback, which is being unveiled

this month in Thailand. We're looking at the feasibility of bringing that to India and are considering both the sedan and the hatch versions," Mitsubishi Motors Corporation, Japan's Executive Officer and Corporate General Manager of Asia and ASEAN, Mr Masahiko Ueki said.

"We need more sales outlets to generate volumes. We need a proper infrastructure. We need some more time to launch that car in India. We may invest in this by ourselves or with our partner."

In the price-sensitive Rs 2-6 lakh (approx) small car segment, which accounts for

60 per cent of the cars sold in the country, a newcomer will have to jostle for space with over 25 models from about 12 carmakers. Honda, Toyota, Nissan and Volkswagen are companies who have joined incumbents Maruti Suzuki and Hyundai recently for a slice of the pie.

NEW SUV

Meanwhile, Mitsubishi launched its first significant new model in India in over three years – the 'Pajero Sport' Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV) – at Rs 23.53 lakh. Its Outlander was launched in 2008.

Powered by a 2.5-litre turbo-charged diesel engine

putting out 178 PS of power, the new SUV competes with the Toyota Fortuner, Ford Endeavour, Hyundai Santa Fe and the smaller BMW X1.

Initially imported from Japan as a fully-built model, the partners are investing about Rs 50 crore in setting up a new line at its plant near Chennai for local assembly of the Pajero Sport, after which the prices will be reduced, an official said.

Mitsubishi currently sells mostly SUVs such as the Outlander, Pajero and Montero in India, apart from the Lancer and Cedia sedans and the Lancer Evo sports car.

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