

HM rolls out taxi exchange scheme

Our Bureau KOLKATA

HINDUSTAN Motors could perhaps call it: Ambassador-Se-Ambassador-Tak. A taxi exchange scheme for Kolkata cabbies: change the old ramshackle jumping jalopy for a brand new Ambassador Grand 1.5 diesel, Bharat III car for a discount of Rs 35,000!

That's the latest marketing gimmick from the CK Birla flagship, which organised a press conference on Tuesday to announce its innovative "taxi exchange scheme." The scheme will be launched on June 11.

Hindustan Motors' Uttarpara plant executive vice-president Moley Chowdhury told reporters: "Our exchange scheme will not only help taxi owners upgrade to a new Ambassador car with ease, it will also curb pollution." Currently, there are over 20,000 taxis plying in Kolkata of which about 50-60% taxis are more than 10 years old.

Elaborating on the scheme, Mr Chowdhury said: "All that an owner will have to do is come to one of the three authorised dealers of the company in Kolkata and get a brand new taxi after completing the necessary formalities." The CK Birla-controlled Hindustan Motors has already sold some 70 plus AC metered Ambassador taxis in Kolkata.

Moreover, these taxis will give an improved mileage of approximately 16 km per litre because of improved engine and five speed gear box compared to 11 km per litre mileage one gets from an old Ambassador. These cars will also have 5 +1 split seats, moulded door pads and a mobile charge station. Hindustan Motors' Uttarpara plant churns out nearly 1,000 Ambassador cars per month.

Besides cars, the plant also has other verticals like auto stampings, auto forging and auto castings.

The company is busy implementing a Rs 100 crore 'revival & renewal project' at its automotive industrial complex at Uttarpara in West Bengal to turn around the unit.

It is busy expanding the auto component sector by developing a large modern automotive forging, castings and stampings business, introducing new variants of Ambassador cars and a new car from the plant this year.