

Daimler launches trucks from new Indian factory

MUMBAI, INDIA: Daimler on Wednesday launched its first trucks produced from a new factory in India, in a move to grab a share of the growing commercial vehicles market and challenge domestic competition.



The Stuttgart-based company, whose rivals include Navistar International and Volvo, will be going head-to-head to reduce the dominance of Indian giants Tata Motors and Ashok Leyland.

Daimler expects to shake up the market by offering fuel-efficient trucks that give higher mileage than rival producers and at competitive prices. "This is an emotional day for us... We are back," said Marc Llistosella, chief executive of Daimler India Commercial Vehicles.

Daimler, one of the world's largest manufacturers of medium- and heavy-duty trucks, has returned to India after its initial foray nearly 60 years ago. "Now we have come on our own. We had to do something new and different for the Indian customer," Llistosella told reporters and dealers in Mumbai.

The firm said its new "BharatBenz" range of commercial vehicles, "Bharat" means India in Hindi, have been designed and made specially for India's notoriously poor-quality roads. The first three trucks now on the market are priced between 1.57 million and 2.0 million rupees (\$29,600 to \$37,800), the firm said. They are the first in a range of 17 models to be launched over the next 17 months.

Indian truck sales total more than 300,000 annually. Daimler opened its manufacturing plant in April at Oragadam, near the southern port city of Chennai. The plant has an initial capacity to manufacture 36,000 vehicles but will eventually nearly double capacity to 70,000 after two years.

In 1954, Daimler partnered the Tatas to provide technology for trucks, which ended in 1969. A second partnership ended in 2010, when Daimler exited Tata Motors, selling a 5.34 percent stake. In 2009, a link-up with New Delhi-based Hero group also ended after Hero pulled out.

Source: *AFP* via I-NET Bridge

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