KENICHI AYUKAWA BACKS MULTIPLE OPTIONS TO TACKLE POLLUTION

'Demand Slow... How to Find Customers an Issue'

Maruti Suzuki MD expects the market to pick up only after the elections

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New Delhi: Maruti Suzuki managing director Kenichi Ayukawa expects the Indian automotive market to pick up only after general elections this year. The company, which has recorded flat sales through the past eight months, said finding potential customers is an important issue.

"Demand has become slow compared to the past few years. That is true. How we are going to find potential customers that is a very important issue. It takes time...We expect, after elections, once again it (the market) will come up." Ayukawa told ET.

Passenger vehicle sales in the domestic market declined for the sixth time this January with weak consumer sentiments, tightening liquidity after the IL&FS crisis and increased insurance costs hampe-

Maruti Suzuki itself said post the launch of the new WagonR the company expects wholesale volumes to grow 5% in the fourth quarter. However, the sluggish market environment has meant the company's volumes have grown by 1.1% and 0.9% in January and February respectively.

Maruti Suzuki has already revised downwards its fiscal year volumes' growth target vironmental concern. to 8%, against its initial tar-



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MD. Maruti Suzuki

get of double-digit growth. Terming 2019 'a very complicated year,' Ayukawa said the transition to BS-VI emission standards will bring with it its own production and inventory management challenges. The company has plans to halt production of BS-IV compliant vehicles by the end of the calendar year.

Elaborating on the government's drive to go green, Ayukawa said there should be a collaborative approach utilising electric, hybrid, CNG technologies to reduce oil consumption and address en-

"I think we cannot focus so

much on one way to reduce oil consumption and environmental concern. To achieve that objective, various approaches are available electric is one approach, hybrid another and then CNG," informed Ayukawa.

He said reducing cost of electric vehicles is not 'easy' and cost reduction itself is dependent on volumes and market demand. "Some players (have) started EV business, but (it is) not so much easy. That is everybody's condition." Meanwhile, Maruti Suzuki is testing the electric version of WagonR it built inhouse, but expects technology for newer vehicles from Toyota going ahead.

"Even though right now we start by supplying some of our products to them, but in future, we are getting some products from them and those kinds of collaboration will be developed step-by-step. Eventually, both sides will be makinggains. That is the purpose of this kind of alignment. Also, globally, the auto industry is quickly changing. Toyota side they have very advanced technology etc. May be we can learn through this kind of alliance", Ayukawa said.

Separately, Ayukawa said Maruti Suzuki is looking to move out of Gurugram but is likely to remain in Haryana as most of the company's workers are from the area. He declined to disclose a timeline for the project. "Of course, area-wise, area (Gurugram) is already mature and we have got to develop further more. That is true...(But) We have to consider at any time, our employees...They are working in the area, and that is an important issue," Ayukawa said.

On Tenterhooks A series of policy measures before the

upcoming general elections is keeping top American technology companies working in India on tenterhooks. In the last one year,

Tata Motors to Put Safety in Driver's Seat

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Geneva: Tata Motors would enhance its focus on safety features to help achieve the government's objective of fewer fatalities on Indian roads, with the Nexon SUV giving the country's biggest automotive company the confidence to build cars high on the security quotient.

Its future cars, Tata Motors believes, would not only meet the global NCAP standards but also exceed the minimum safety rating requirement prescribed locally The Nexon SUV secured a five-star rating on safety. The aim is to secure 5 star rating on all its products in the next 2-3 years.

The owner of JLR will now harness newgeneration platforms Alfa and Omega for launching more than a dozen products in the

next five years. Tata Motors is seeking to enhance its market share locally through this new range of cars that are high on safety, expecting to pose a challenge to leaders Maruti and Hyundai. "If there is a star, I would like to have five of them on safety. That is the new normal for vehicles at Tata Motors," Guenter Butschek, MD of Tata Motors, said Tuesday on the sidelines of the 89th Geneva Motor Show.

To be sure, India has the highest number of road fatalities globally, at 1.5 lakh deaths a year. According to reports. 60% of the victims are the age group of 18-35 - or primary income-earners. The company on Tuesday unveiled four global premiers at the Geneva Motor Show. These included the Buzzard 7 seater SUV, the Altroz premium hatchback. the Altroz electric vehicle with a range of more than 300 kilometres per charge, and H2X small SUV concept.

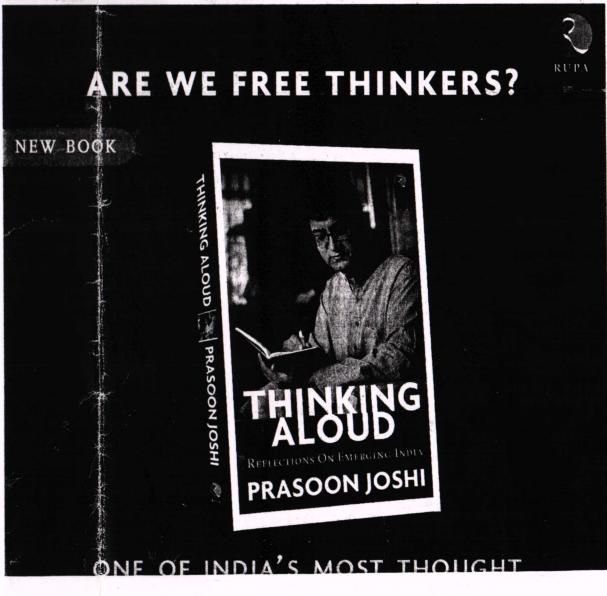
(This correspondent is attending the Geneva International Motor Show at the invitation of Tata Motors)

Audi Launches New A6 Edition at₹49.9 lakh

New Delhi: German car maker Audi on Tuesday launched its A6 sedan Lifestyle Edition in India, priced at ₹49.99 lakh. The A6 Lifestyle Edition is equipped with new added features and accessories such as rear seat entertain-









Civic is Coming Back



Almost six years after it was discontinued due to falling sales. the Honda Civic is making a

comeback in the Indian market. Earlier, Civic enjoyed a 45% share of the

Looking Elsewhere

A hurried regulation may help corporate-

issued tokens. But startup founders, who could have contributed towards making India an

