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JOGINDER P. MALHOTRA

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Your perseverance made Autoguide a guidebook
for the industry for the past 55 yrs.

Team Autoguide

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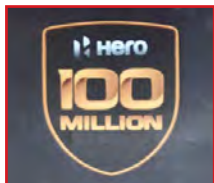


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Editor's viewpoint



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Executive Editor
SHILPA MALHOTRA

Budget pack, January sales raise spirits

THE Union Budget 2021-22 is the biggest development of the past four weeks and we encapsulate various aspects of this annual exercise in the Cover Story of the month. Accompanying that is the feedback by key stakeholders of the automotive sector. It's encouraging to see widespread acceptance of the Budget proposals by the industry along with a valid longing for more positive steps in the days to come.

The Finance Minister, Mrs Nirmala Sitharaman, had a challenging task at hand – attempting to revive the pandemic-hit economy, ensuring demand-generation and creating more jobs. By presenting a Budget focused on healthcare, infrastructure and manufacturing; while keeping it in sync with the current requirements, she has done a commendable job. For the automobile sector, the announcement of a scrappage policy for older vehicles is a wish-fulfillment though the voluntary nature of it is a bit of letdown. The industry is now waiting for the details of the policy with the hope that the Government packs it with

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A
SCRAPPAGE POLICY FOR OLDER
VEHICLES IS A WISH-FULFILLMENT FOR
THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

enough incentives and also designs it in a manner that encourages people to go for EVs as replacement to their junked vehicles. The other Budget goodies for the sector include Rs 18k-crore support for acquisition of over 20,000 buses, reduction in custom duties for steel products and doubling of outlay for MSMEs, besides, of course, an overriding focus on infrastructure development.

Among its negatives, an increase in customs duty on certain auto parts to 15 per cent has come as a dampener. Though the proposal has been made with an objective of encouraging localisation, it will lead to hike in input costs for manufacturers in the short term. The lack of any direct announcement for EVs, particularly regarding the inverted duty structure on batteries, is also disappointing. Likewise, many of the recommendations comprising the industry wish-list have been ignored in the Budget, but a mixed bag offered by the FM has got its full endorsement.

Apart from the Budget, sales numbers of the first month of 2021 have kept the industry's spirits high. It's for the sixth month in succession that the PV sales have registered growth, confirming hopes that the demand is here to stay. We carry full details of the January sales data besides covering other key developments of the industry in this Budget-special issue.

Enjoy reading!!



Scrapping policy biggest takeaway

A mixed bag for automobile sector

The industry is hopeful that besides serving the cause of a clean environment, the scrappage policy would spur the demand for passenger and commercial vehicles.



PRESENTING the first Budget after the pandemic, which ravaged the economy globally, and in India, the task before the Finance Minister Mrs Nirmala Sitharaman was daunting but, one must say, she came out trumps! The Union Budget 2021-22 presented by her on February 1 carries a strong focus on reviving economy and stimulating demand, thereby, turning out to be a progressive one on all counts.

The automobile industry, which too bore the brunt of the pandemic-induced lockdown but was quick enough to tread the recovery path once the country opened up, had huge expectations from the Budget and the FM has not disappointed it, to a large extent. Apart from announcing a voluntary scrappage policy, which it had been demanding for long, the Budget 2021 proposed several measures intended to help the sector in its growth trajectory in the year ahead.

Be it the strong thrust on infrastructure development, allocation to support acquisition of over 20k buses, reduction in custom duties for steel products or doubling of outlay for the MSME sector, the Budget offerings have largely comforted the automobile industry. Not without reason, it has applauded the FM's effort in one voice, with the loudest cheer being reserved for the announcement of a voluntary scrappage policy for old vehicles.

However, an increase in custom duty on some auto parts, no tweaking of GST on automobiles, no relief on personal income tax and lack of any direct announcement for EVs in the Budget 2021 have caused a bit of disappointment. In fact, the pre-Budget recommendations by the industry have mostly been sidestepped. It is now being hoped that the Government will pay heed to them during the course of the year.

Coming after a wait of over a decade, the vehicle scrappage policy is certainly the biggest takeaway of the Budget for the automobile industry. Announcing the policy, Mrs. Sitharaman said, "This will help in encouraging fuel-efficient, environment-friendly vehicles, thereby reducing vehicular pollution and oil import bill. Further, she said, "vehicles would undergo fitness tests in automated fitness centres after 20 years in case of personal vehicles, and after 15 years in case of commercial vehicles." Details of the scheme will be announced later by the concerned ministry, she said.

The support for acquisition of 20k buses move will push demand in the commercial vehicle industry which is still to recover from sluggishness caused by lockdown-related curbs.



BUDGET AT A GLANCE

Positives

- Scrappage policy for old vehicles
- Rs 18k-cr for acquiring 20k buses
- Customs duty cut for steel products
- Outlay doubled for the MSME sector

Negatives

- custom duty HIKE on some auto parts
- No tweaking of GST rates on autos
- No relief in personal income tax
- No direct announcement for EVs



The industry is hopeful that besides serving the cause of a clean environment, the policy would spur the demand for passenger and commercial vehicles. It is also hopeful that the scheme will be incentivised sufficiently and also designed in a manner that it pushes the adoption of electric vehicles. Though the policy announced by the FM is voluntary, making the fitness check of vehicles mandatory would have made the industry happier.

In another boost to the sector, the minister announced Rs 18,000-crore support for acquisition of over 20,000 buses. "A new scheme will be launched at a cost of Rs 18,000 crore to support augmentation of public bus transport services. The scheme will facilitate deployment of innovative PPP models to enable private sector players to finance, acquire, operate and maintain over 20,000 buses", she said in her Budget speech. The move is bound to push demand in the commercial vehicle industry, which is still to recover from sluggishness caused by lockdown-related curbs.

The highest-ever allocation of Rs 1,18,101 lakh crore to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways for highway infrastructure work is being seen as having the potential to boost heavy truck and tipper industry. Similarly, the doubling of the outlay for the MSME sector to Rs 15,700 crore this year is a cause for cheer as the auto component industry is dominated by MSMEs. The cut in customs duty on steel products to 7.5 per cent will bring down the input cost for automobile manufacturers, thereby benefiting the customers as well.

An increase in custom duty on some auto parts, no tweaking of GST, no relief on personal IT and lack of any direct announcement for EVs have caused a bit of disappointment.

The major negative for the industry, however, is the Budget proposal to increase custom duty from 10 per cent to 15 per cent on vehicle components like frames and forks, wheel rims & spokes, hubs, brakes, saddles, pedals & crank gear etc. "There is immense potential in manufacturing heavy capital equipment domestically. We will comprehensively review the rate structure in due course", said the FM while announcing the revision.

The proposal has not gone well with the industry as it will increase the cost of production and consumers will have to bear the brunt. The decision, apparently, is the Budget's contribution to the cause of self-reliance (or atmanirbharta) but till the time the manufacturing of these parts gathers strength in India, the industry will be in an uncomfortable situation.

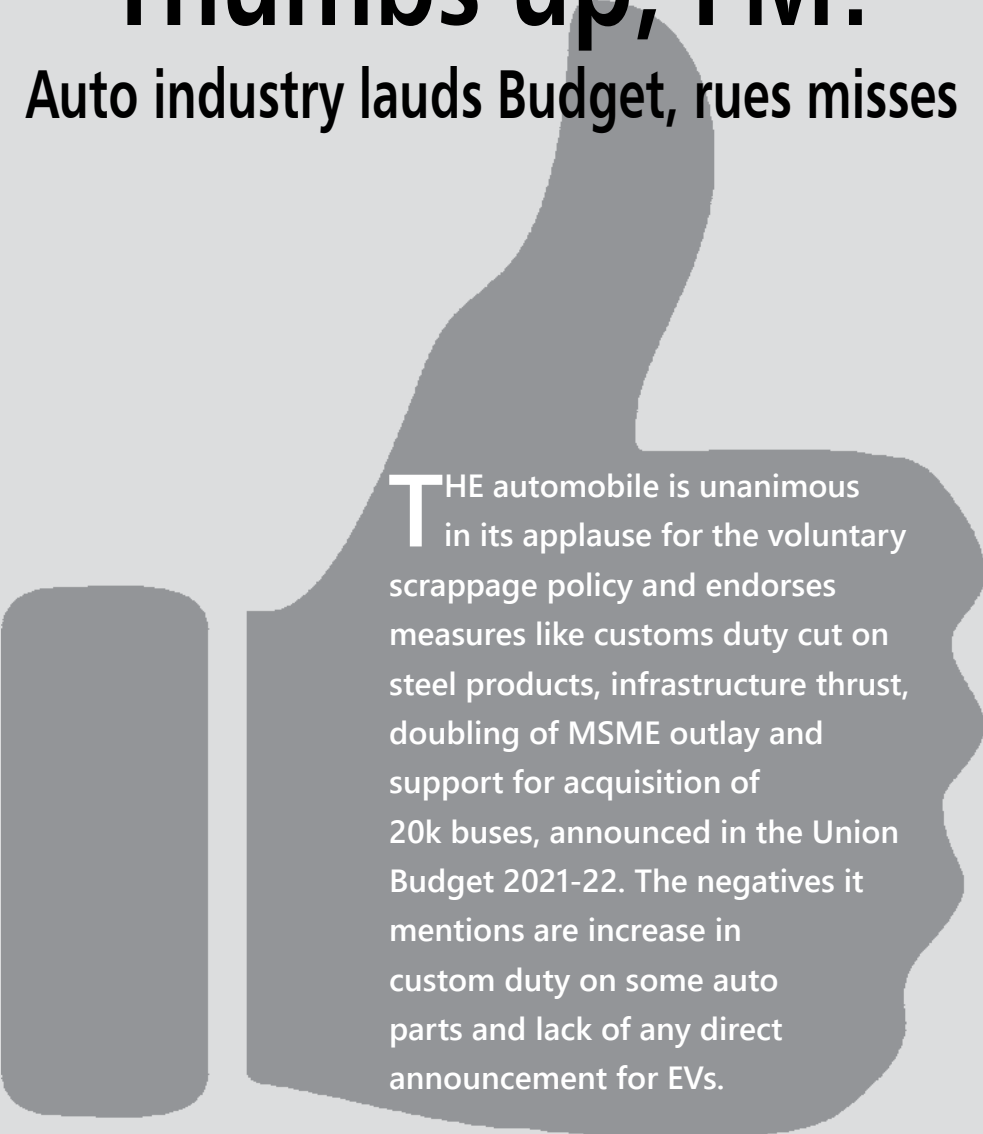
The Budget's refusal to tweak tax structure for the automobile industry, which could have made the vehicles a little more affordable for people, is another negative. Also, the salaried class, among the biggest spenders in the automobile market, has not got any relief by way of income tax rate or slab restructuring. More liquidity available with this section would surely have given an impetus to vehicular sales.

The absence of any direct allocation for promotion of electrical vehicles or any major investment for strengthening the charging infrastructure is jarring, besides being surprising. With more and people veering towards an EV switchover, some kind of incentive from the Budget could have propelled the EV sales in the country. Also, nothing has been done to set right the inverted duty structure on batteries, a persistent demand of the industry.

Overall, the Union Budget 2021-22 has offered a few goodies to the automobile industry while also missing an opportunity to do more. But there is always a next time, which is not necessarily the Budget 2022. The sector is sanguine about more positive policy interventions from the Government during the course of the year.

Thumbs up, FM!

Auto industry lauds Budget, rues misses



THE automobile is unanimous in its applause for the voluntary scrappage policy and endorses measures like customs duty cut on steel products, infrastructure thrust, doubling of MSME outlay and support for acquisition of 20k buses, announced in the Union Budget 2021-22. The negatives it mentions are increase in custom duty on some auto parts and lack of any direct announcement for EVs.



Mr Kenichi Ayukawa
President, SIAM

“The announcement of major highway projects with sizeable increase in infrastructure outlay will help revive demand for both commercial vehicles and private vehicles. The allocation for procurement of 20,000 buses will directly benefit the industry. While SIAM awaits the details of the vehicle scrappage scheme, it hopes and requests that fitness testing and certification should be much earlier and at frequent intervals to ensure safety, environment friendliness and fuel saving. The reduction in customs duty on some steel grades, and revoking of countervailing duty and anti-dumping duty on certain steel products is a welcome step. The increase in customs duty on auto parts/lithium ion cell parts is of concern and is likely to increase cost of manufacturing automobiles, wherever indigenisation is yet to happen.”

“Announcements with regards to increased spend on road infrastructure, voluntary scrappage policy, Research & Development and PLI among others augur well for the automotive sector. Further, continued focus on building rural and agricultural infrastructure and prioritising agriculture credit growth will have long-term positive impact on rural demand for vehicles. Increase in basic customs duty on select auto components will encourage local manufacturing of such items. It is also heartening that the Budget outlay for the MSME sector has been doubled compared to last year. The auto component industry is dominated by MSME and this will provide them the necessary succour as the industry recovers.”



Mr Deepak Jain
President, ACMA



Mr. Vinkesh Gulati
President, FADA

“FADA is happy to note that the Finance Minister has finally announced the much-awaited scrappage policy, though voluntary to phase out old vehicles. If we take 1990 as base year, there are approximately 37L CVs and 52L PVs eligible for voluntarily scrappage. As an estimate, 10 pc of CV and 5 pc of PV may still be plying on road. We still need to see the fine prints to access the kind of incentives which will be on offer and thus have a positive effect on retail. While we expected disposable income for individuals to increase with enhancement of IT slabs and depreciation benefit on vehicles for individuals, the same has not been taken into consideration.”

“We thank the Finance Minister for announcing the scrappage policy, which would help in encouraging the adoption of greener vehicles. Though we are awaiting more details on the policy, we hope that it would be designed in such a way that would automatically push the adoption of electric vehicles. The Government’s plan for strengthening the public transport sector under PPP models with an outlay of Rs 18000 crore for operating 20,000 buses is encouraging for the EV industry. The scheme could strengthen the EV industry if more number of e-buses could be supported through the scheme.”



Mr Sohinder Gill
Director General, SMEV



Mr. Nikunj Sanghi
Chairman, ASDC

“The Union Budget 2021 has given due importance to skilling and education which is a welcome move in today’s skill-driven industry. The Government’s focus on supporting local manufacturing, skill development, and a heightened emphasis on job creation will lead to greater opportunities for the youth of the country. In addition to that, the partnership with the United Arab Emirates and Japan to promote industrial & vocational skills, techniques, and knowledge is a major boost for the sector.”



Mr. Vikram Kirloskar
Vice-Chairman,
Toyota Kirloskar Motor

“Faced with the challenge of delivering rapid, inclusive, economic growth with heightened focus on health and welfare in an environment of economic contraction and sharp increase in fiscal deficit due to COVID, the Finance Minister has struck a remarkable balance between growth and fiscal prudence by setting pragmatic revised targets and glide path for fiscal consolidation. From an auto industry perspective, the long-awaited voluntary scrapping policy can help take older vehicles off the roads thus contributing to lower fuel consumption, pollution as also generating additional demand for cleaner new vehicles.”

“For the automobile sector, which is a significant contributor to India’s GDP, there are multiple welcome announcements including a voluntary vehicle scrapping policy to phase out old and unfit vehicles, augmenting public transport system in urban areas, continuing focus on adoption of cleaner fuels, and enhancing outlays for developing road infrastructure and expanding the Swachh Bharat Mission.”



Mr Guenter Butschek
CEO & MD, Tata Motors



Dr. Waman Parkhi
Partner, Indirect Tax,
KPMG in India

“Finance Minister, while acknowledging immense potential for heavy capital equipment manufacture has also assured review of the customs duty structure for such goods. Customs duty rates on certain auto parts such as safety glass, electrical lighting and signaling equipment, windscreen wipers, etc. have been increased to 15 pc from the current rate of 7.5 pc/10 pc with an objective of promoting Indian manufacture of goods. PLI schemes for various manufacturing sectors will also positively support such manufacture. Voluntary vehicle scrapping policy besides contributing to lower emissions and improving safety on road would also generate demand for vehicles for the auto sector.”

“The Union Budget for 2021-22 augurs well to create capacity for developmental and growth in the country. Increased outlays in the road sector, infrastructure development and introduction of the voluntary vehicle scrappage policy will not only create a safer and environment-friendly auto sector but also drive replacement demand in the sector.”



Mr. Gurpratap Boparai
MD, Skoda Auto VW India

“The Budget 2021 has the potential to revive the economy at large. With respect to the auto sector, increase in custom duty on certain auto parts would impact the input cost, although we're yet to assess the financial impact. On the voluntary scrappage policy, strict governance on the fitness test would determine the benefit on the environment and pollution reduction.”



Mr. Ashish Gupta
Brand Director,
Volkswagen Passenger Cars



Mr Chetan Maini
Chairman & Co-founder,
SUN Mobility

“The Budget is focused on speeding up recovery post-COVID, while also providing solid direction to do so, over the next few years, which is excellent. When it comes to electric mobility, the main expectation was a firmer commitment from a policy standpoint by the Government for accelerating e-mobility and enabling charging and battery swapping infrastructure in the country for the same. One of the key measures for doing so would have been to fix the inverted duty structure for components such as batteries from 18 per cent to 5 per cent, and for charging/swapping infrastructure services from 18 pc to 5 pc as well. While this was not mentioned during the Budget, we look forward to the GST Council taking this up, and implementing it soon.”

“The Finance Minister has presented a ‘pro-growth’ Budget in these unprecedented times, which will give a boost to the Indian economy which is on path to recovery. Rightly, there is a huge emphasis on infrastructure, which will help revive economy as well as generate employment. Finally the much-awaited scrappage policy has been announced, which is a welcome step. This will increase sale of new vehicles and in turn boost tyre demand.”



Dr. Raghupati Singhania
Chairman & MD,
JK Tyre & Industries



Mr. Satyakam Arya
MD & CEO,
Daimler India CVs

“The Government continues to focus on addressing the critical issue of rising pollution and on promoting infrastructural growth. DICV welcomes the Government's decision of introducing the voluntary vehicle scrapping policy and the Budget allocation for the road projects. With the announcement of Infrastructure for roadways, we see even more demand for BharatBenz products in the construction tipper segment. Furthermore, the push towards increasing national highway corridors will help Improve inter-state connectivity; thereby creating a stimulus for fresh demand in urban transportation. An incentive based scrappage policy can accelerate the need for cleaner vehicles and will be more impactful for the environment.”



Mr. Nishant Arya
Executive Director,
JBM Group

“The allocation of Rs 18,000 crore for the public bus transport services has come as a sigh of relief for the bus-makers who have been caught in the doldrums from 2019. We, as an industry player, are now looking forward to the details of the vehicle scrappage scheme which will be an added advantage for the auto sector. The heavy and medium commercial vehicle sector will also have a boost in demand as a sum of Rs 5.54 trillion has been allocated for infrastructure development. The 2.5-5 per cent reduction in the customs duty on some of the semi-finished and finished steel products will have a positive impact on the automotive industry.”

“Long-term progressive Budget built on sound strategy for improving national health and economic recovery. The Government’s resolve to support manufacturing and infrastructure sector is commendable. The emphasis on Government spending in building pan-India transport and allied infrastructure should have a positive impact in reviving consumer demand for vehicles. The allocation of a sizeable sum towards the PLI scheme will help the industry create jobs and boost economic growth. While the auto sector would have liked to see more direct measures in the Budget, however the scrappage policy is certainly a step in the right direction for both ecology and economy.”



Mr Nagesh Basavanhalli
Group CEO & MD,
Greaves Cotton Limited



Mr Tarun Mehta
Co-founder & CEO, Ather Energy

“The voluntary vehicle scrappage policy announced to phase out old and unfit vehicles will encourage the sales of new vehicles. It is good to see that the Government is looking at addressing the concerns regarding GST inverted duty structure. We look forward to more details on the inverted duty structure and the Production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme announced by the Finance Minister.”

“The Budget is very forward-looking one - the focus on infrastructure and spending will boost the job market and build confidence in the industry. It’s a step towards a robust economic reform agenda. The Budget, however, did not talk much on the automobile sector, specifically on EV. Raising custom duty will result in an increase in the cost of EVs.”



Mr. Harsh Didwania
Co-Founder & Director, EeVe India

Tata Motors unveils *Altroz iTurbo* on first anniversary of brand



CELEBRATING first anniversary of its premium hatchback *Altroz*, Tata Motors on January 13 unveiled the new *Altroz iTurbo*. Ready to create another benchmark with new gizmos and the new engine addition, *Altroz iTurbo* will be powered by 1.2L Petrol iTurbo engine and a new top of the line XZ+ trim which will flaunt all the new and exceptional features.

To further enhance the design elements, *Altroz* in its 2021 avatar will also sport the new black and light grey interiors accentuated with perforated leatherette seats.

The *Altroz* will also be equipped with the iRA tech – a connected car technology by Tata Motors. Apart from 27 new and additional features, it also comes with a natural voice tech, through which the car understands and processes voice commands not only in English or Hindi, but also in Hinglish.

PVs make a bright start

Overall sales soar 16 per cent in January

THE automobile industry made a bright start to the New Year 2021 with most carmakers reporting increase in sales numbers for the month of January. It is the sixth month in succession that the passenger vehicle segment has traversed the growth trajectory.

Overall, the PV segment recorded cumulative vehicle dispatches of 3,03,904 units, a rise of 16 per cent over the same month last year.

Although market leader Maruti Suzuki India Limited posted a 0.6 per cent decline in sales at 1,39,002 units as against 1,39,844 units in January 2020, the carmaker witnessed a hefty increase of 45 per cent in demand for its utility vehicles. The sales of the company's entry-level hatchbacks were down between 3 and 9 per cent. At the top of the sales charts as always, the company, however, saw its market share declining by 7.59 per cent YoY and 5.37 pc MoM.

Hyundai Motor India registered a 24 per cent uptick in sales during the month at 52,005 units, as against 42,002 units sold in January last year. Mr Tarun Garg, Director, Sales, Marketing and Service, HMIL, said, "The growth momentum has been achieved on account of great customer pull for our most innovative recently-launched products like the new Creta, Verna and the all-new i20 showcasing brand supremacy in their respective segments."

Homegrown brand Tata Motors recorded a whopping 94 per cent YoY growth in volumes in January 2021 with total sales of 26,980 units as against 13,893 in the corresponding month of the last year. According to media reports, the refreshed Nexon compact SUV, Altroz premium hatchback as well as Harrier are the top performers for the company, which has also commenced bookings for its iconic SUV brand, Safari, re-launched in a new avatar.

Another homegrown giant Mahindra & Mahindra reported total sales of 20,498 units during the month, up 5 per cent over 19,555 sold in January last year.

The latest entrant to the market, Kia Motors, witnessed 23 per cent spurt in sales at 19,056 units, as against 15,450 units it sold in the same month last year. The continued success of its mid-size SUV Seltos and compact SUV Sonet are behind the impressive sales numbers.

Honda Cars India also put up a remarkable performance in January registering domestic sales of 11,319 units as against 5,299 in January 2020, a significant rise of 114 per cent. "The strong demand for our popular sedans Amaze

and City in fact exceeded the supply last month and we seem to be heading towards sustainable market recovery except for a few challenges", said Mr Rajesh Goel, SVP and Director, Marketing and Sales, HCIL.

While Toyota Kirloskar Motor recorded total domestic sales of 11,126 units as against 5,804 in January last year, an increase of 92 per cent, alliance partners Renault-Nissan too posted healthy numbers during the month. Renault India reported sales of 8,209 units (up 5 per cent), and Nissan Motor India 4,527 units, a significant rise of 220 pc.

MG Motor India's sales witnessed 15 per cent increase during the month at 3,602 units, compared to 3,130 units in January 2020. Mr Rakesh Sidana, Director – Sales, MG Motor India, said, "We have received a good response for the Hector 2021 including the latest addition to the family – Hector Plus 7-seater."

In the two-wheeler segment, market leader Hero MotoCorp witnessed total domestic sales of 4,67,776 units during the month, a decline of 4.16 per cent from 4,88,069 units sold in January 2020. The company's exports at 18,113 units accounted for 3.73 per cent of its total sales.

TVS Motor Co dispatched a total of 3,07,149 units (domestic + export) as against 2,34,920 units in the month of January last year, a YoY growth of 31 per cent.

RANK	OEM	Jan'21	Jan'20	GROWTH
1	Maruti Suzuki	1,39,002	1,39,844	-0.6%
2	Hyundai	52,005	42,002	23.8%
3	Tata	26,980	13,893	94.2%
4	Mahindra**	20,498	19,555	4.8%
5	Kia	19,056	15,450	23.3%
6	Honda	11,320	5,299	113.6%
7	Toyota	11,126	5,804	91.7%
8	Renault	8,209	7,805	5.2%
9	Ford	4,141	4,881	-15.2%
10	Nissan	4,021	1,413	184.6%
11	MG	3,602	3,130	15.1%
12	Volkswagen	2,041	1,102	85.2%
13	Skoda	1,004	1,347	-25.5%
14	FCA	394	701	-43.8%

**Excludes Maxximo & Supro Volumes

Safari bookings start; delivery from Feb 22



TATA Motors opened bookings for the all-new *Safari* starting February 4. The vehicles have been displayed and are available for test drives across the company's dealer network. The price announcement and deliveries of the iconic SUV will begin on February 22. Earlier, in a flag-off ceremony held on January 14, the first *Safari* rolled out of the line from company's plant in Pune.

Unveiling the first official look of the new Tata *Safari*, Mr. Guenter Butschek, CEO & MD, Tata Motors, said, "The *Safari* is our flagship offering to connect the aspirations of the discerning and evolved Indian customer. It had introduced India to the SUV lifestyle and in its new avatar, will carry forward this rich idea to build further its legacy."

Announcing the bookings, Mr. Shailesh Chandra, President, PVBU, Tata Motors, said, "The new *Safari* has received a great response especially with respect to its premium design and outstanding comfort in all three rows of seats during the preview drives by our media friends. We are gearing up in full power to launch our iconic brand in this new avatar."

A press release said, the all-new *Safari* is ready to re-energise the SUV segment with a host of class-defining features. *Safari's* unique and domineering stance has been enhanced in the new avatar and key areas like the elegant grille, the unmistakable stepped roof and the imposing tailgate have been given ultra-premium finishes. Sculpted impeccably with an uncompromised strong stance, imposing wheel arches and sharp R18 diamond cut alloys give it a robust look. Careful accenting of chrome gives the new *Safari* a jewel-like appearance, said the release.

The interiors of the new *Safari* have been crafted with exquisite deft to convey a classy, comfortable feel via diligently curated choice of features and the intriguing addition of superlative details.

The vehicle will come with plush Benecke Kaliko Oyster White interiors paired with Ash Wood dashboard, best-in-segment panoramic sunroof, captain seats and spacious third row seating.

The *Safari* will come with 170 PS Kryotec Diesel Engine equipped with a six-speed Automatic/Manual Transmission.

The state-of-the-art infotainment comprises nine JBL speakers accompanied by an 8.8" floating island infotainment system.

The new *Safari* comes packed with features across trim levels making each variant desirable in its own way, said the release. The base *XE* variant offers dual airbags, all disc brakes, electronic stability program along with hill hold control and rollover mitigation, making it a well-rounded package for all. The Multi Drive Modes and touchscreen music system starts from *XM* variant onwards.

According to the press release, the new *Safari* further builds on the legacy of prestige and outstanding performance by combining Tata Motors' Impact 2.0 design language with the proven capability of OMEGARC, architecture derived from D8 platform from Land Rover. It has evolved to satisfy the new-age SUV customers, who demand arresting design, unparalleled versatility, plush and comfortable interiors, outstanding performance for a modern, multifaceted lifestyle.

Partners with ADLOID for AR launch of Safari

ADLOID, a B2B SaaS company, has partnered with Tata Motors for the launch of its new Safari 2021 with the help of Augmented Reality. It is the only company that claims to meet the needs of enterprise customers across multiple sectors (automotive, lifestyle and home décor) without compromising on any features of the AR experience. Mr Kanav Singla, Founder and CEO of ADLOID, said, "Augmented Reality is the integrated part of the future and Tata Safari's immersive AR experience will lead the auto industry towards digital transformation. We offer a rich digital experience much closer to walking around a real car than any other video or imagery could ever provide."

MG LAUNCHES *HECTOR* 2021 RANGE



Mr Rajeev Chaba, President & MD, MG Motor India, at the launch of all-new MG Hector 2021

SUV now comes with several enhancements, additional features, new seat configurations

MG Motor India on January 7 launched the all-new *Hector* 2021 range starting at ₹12.89 lakh.

Hector 2021 is now more evolved as it comes loaded with several first-in-segment features, dual-tone exteriors and interiors, and a plethora of options to choose from, said a press release.

The SUV now has an overpowering look with an all-new bold thermo-pressed front chrome grille, luxurious champagne and black dual-tone themed interior, 18-inch stylish dual-tone alloys, updated i-Smart with industry-first Hinglish voice commands and many more features that add to its style statement, added the release.

The car is now available in its newly launched seven-seater avatar along with five and six-seater options.

Speaking on the launch, Mr. Rajeev Chaba, President & Managing Director, MG Motor India, said, "At MG, our



Mr Gaurav Gupta, Chief Commercial Officer, MG Motor India

constant endeavor is to capture the imagination of our customers. With the *Hector 2021* line-up, we have made changes taking into consideration customer and automotive experts' feedback. *Hector's* evolution has made the internet SUV an even more compelling choice in its segment."

The newly introduced seven-seater variant of *Hector Plus* is an Internet SUV with a panoramic sunroof and gets updated 18-inch stylish dual-tone alloys. It provides room for more occupants with second row bench seats for three adults and the third row for two children. The seven-seater will come in Style, Super, Smart, and a new 'Select' trim levels, said the release.

The *Hector Plus* six-seater with captain seats also gets updated 18-inch stylish dual-tone alloys, front ventilated seats, wireless charging, and auto-dimming IRVM.

Hector 2021 has introduced an upgraded i-Smart with Hinglish voice commands. It is equipped with engine start alarm and an in-car voice alert for critical tyre pressure. The internet SUV can now also understand and respond to 35+ Hinglish commands that control various in-car functions such as Sunroof ("Khul Ja Sim Sim"), FM ("FM Chalao"), AC ("Temperature Kam kar do") and many more.

BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine



Mr. Vikram Pawah,
President, BMW Group India

Long wheelbase version of sedan launched in India

BMW India launched the new BMW 3 Series *Gran Limousine* in the country, on January 21. Produced locally at BMW Group's plant in Chennai exclusively for the Indian market, the car is available in both petrol and diesel variants.

The long wheelbase '*Gran Limousine*' is a new addition to the BMW 3 Series family. It is the long wheelbase version of the highly successful BMW 3 Series. It has been launched in India considering the clientele's preference for long sedans.

The new BMW 3 Series *Gran Limousine* takes on the position of the longest, most spacious and comfortable car in its segment and sets a new benchmark in the class, said a press release. It offers sportiness, comfort and innovations exclusively for the Indian market, the release added.

Mr. Vikram Pawah, President, BMW Group India, said, "The 3 Series is the soul of the BMW brand and has won over millions of customers around the world. The ultimate sports sedan has now set the ultimate standard in luxury in a new form – the BMW 3 Series *Gran Limousine*. With its elongated design, enhanced space, luxurious comfort and dynamic performance, the new BMW 3 Series *Gran Limousine* has a unique and captivating character. It delivers sheer driving pleasure and indulges in superlative luxury, making it a perfect choice for individuals as well as the family."

The company release said the new BMW 3 Series *Gran Limousine* blends the joy of driving and the outstanding comfort of an extremely spacious sedan. The grandeur rises many notches higher, thanks to a modern design with a larger, elongated body and bigger rear doors. Due to the extended wheelbase, there is more room to unwind, more legroom for rear passengers and a pleasant seating experience even on long journeys.

The powerful engine ensures thrilling performance and acceleration. The long list of indulgence features such as Panorama Glass Sunroof, Comfort Seats in front, bespoke 'Vernasca' leather upholstery, luxurious rear seat, Parking Assist with Reverse Assist, Ambient Lighting, BMW Live Cockpit Professional and Wireless Charging adds to its appeal.

The new BMW 3 Series *Gran Limousine* is available in two design schemes – Luxury Line and the exclusive M Sport 'First Edition' which is limited to launch phase only. It is available in one diesel variant (BMW 320*td* *Luxury Line*) and two petrol variants (BMW 330*Li* *Luxury Line* and BMW 330*Li* M Sport 'First Edition').

The car is available in four metallic paintworks – Mineral White, Melbourne Red, Carbon Black and Cashmere Silver.



BMW 220i M Sport launched in India



THE BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe was launched in a new petrol variant in India on January 12. Introduced in 'M Sport' package, the new BMW 220i is produced at the BMW Group plant in Chennai, said a press release by the carmaker.

Mr. Vikram Pawah, President, BMW Group India, said, "Designed with a focus on performance and sportiness, the new BMW 220i M Sport demonstrates powerful uniqueness that suits the requirements of motorsport fans. With the dynamics of a petrol engine, first-class driving characteristics and highest comfort, 'Sheer Driving Pleasure' is guaranteed every time."

The BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe is available in four colours - Alpine White (non-metallic) and metallic paintworks - Black Sapphire, Melbourne Red and Storm Bay. The M Sport variant is available in two additional colours - Misano Blue and Snapper Rocks. The BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe, said the release, seamlessly transfers the elegant aesthetics of its larger stable-mates. The exterior embodies a modern and athletic design with precise lines and sculpted surfaces creating a fascinating interplay of light and shade.

The BMW TwinPower Turbo petrol engine melds maximum power with exemplary efficiency and offers spontaneous responsiveness even at low engine speeds. The two-litre, four-cylinder petrol engine produces an output of 190 hp and a maximum torque of 280 Nm at 1350-4600 rpm. The car accelerates from 0 -100 km / hr in just 7.1 seconds. The eight speed steptronic sport automatic transmission comes with shift paddles on the steering wheel. The quick-shift control has been updated once again in the interests of rapid manual gear changes.

Mercedes-Benz launches 2021 GLC

MERCEDES-Benz on January 20 launched the 2021 GLC with 'Mercedes me connect' technology along with a host of additional feature enrichments.

The GLC has remained a key pillar of the company's SUV offensive and has been the highest selling SUV in its portfolio last year, according to a press release.

The fully loaded 2021 GLC now offers more comfort and driving assistance to the customers than ever before, and sets a higher benchmark in the segment in terms of workmanship in the interiors and an advanced multimedia and assistance systems, the release said.

These feature enhancements in the 2021 GLC will help maintain its lead in the mid-size luxury SUV segment and offer customers a compelling choice in form of a fully loaded, connected luxury SUV, it added.



The GLC now features latest connected car technology- 2021 Mercedes me connect integrating Alexa Home, Google Home and parking locations on navigation system and app.

Front seats with massage function have been introduced for the first time in Mercedes-Benz India product line-up with the GLC. The instrument cluster is fully digital with various display options that can be adjusted as per individual needs.

The Remote Engine Start adds to the convenience of starting the car remotely for pre-entry air-conditioning before even the start of the journey. A Parking Package with 360 degree camera is there for additional safety and gives an all-round visibility to the driver.

The 2021 GLC comes in two new exciting colour options: Brilliant Blue and High Tech Silver. While the 2021 GLC 200 is priced at ₹57.40 lakh (ex-showroom, India), the GLC 220d 4M costs ₹63.15 lakh (ex-showroom, India).

Mercedes sold 7,893 cars in 2020

Plans 15 product launches this year



MERCEDES-Benz continued its leadership position in the luxury car segment for the sixth year in a row. In an unprecedented year affected by the pandemic that witnessed unfavourable market conditions, Mercedes-Benz India handed over 7,893 new cars to the customers in the January-December 2020 period.

According to a press release, 'Reimagining Excellence' will be the motto for 2021 with 15 new and facelifted products, new physi-digital experience, differentiated and best-in-class retail experience and long-term sustainability initiatives.

The release said Mercedes-Benz's Q4 2020 sales grew by 40 per cent over the preceding quarter. Fourteen per cent of sales penetration in 2020 was through online bookings, it added.

The 15 products planned for 2021 comprises a mix of models across body shapes, some without any predecessor in the Indian market. Starting Q2, the all new *A-Class Limousine*, New *GLA*, *AMG GT Black Series* are some of the most promising products lined up for a 2021 debut.

Mahindra, Mercedes go for price increase

TWO more manufacturers, Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) and luxury carmaker Mercedes Benz, announced an upward revision of the price of their model range on January 8. While the price increase for Mahindra products came into immediate effect, Mercedes' revised prices became effective from January 15.

M&M announced around 1.9 per cent increase in the prices of its range of personal and commercial vehicles. This will result in an increase of ₹4,500 to ₹40,000, depending on the model and variant, said a company press release.

Mercedes said its "price correction" would be in the range of 5pc across model range. Offsetting the constant rise in input costs become essential to maintain a sustainable and viable business operation for the company and its dealers, said a press release issued by Mercedes Benz.

Maruti begins production, export of *Jimny* from India

MARUTI Suzuki India Limited commenced export of Suzuki's celebrated compact off-roader *Jimny* from India. The first shipment of 184 units left from Mundra port to Latin American countries such as Columbia and Peru. The iconic three-door Suzuki *Jimny* will be exported to Latin America, Middle East and African markets from India.

Known as the 'authentic off-roader', the all-terrain vehicle has a legacy of over 50 years, catering to customers worldwide. The current generation of *Jimny* was launched in 2018 by Suzuki Motor Corporation in Japan and has emerged as a popular choice globally. Customers like its appeal for city driving too.

Jimny was conferred the prestigious World Urban Car Award in the 2019 World Car Awards announced at the New York International Auto Show.



Maruti Suzuki commences production and export of *Jimny* from India

With India as a production base for *Jimny*, Suzuki aims to leverage Maruti Suzuki's global production stature. As there is a large customer demand worldwide well beyond Suzuki Japan capacity for this model, Indian manufacturing will supplement capacity to meet this global demand.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Kenichi Ayukawa, Managing Director & CEO, Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said, "*Jimny* will fulfill aspirations of customers throughout the world. *Jimny* manufactured at Maruti Suzuki's Gurugram plant shares the same specification as the export models produced at the Suzuki Motor Corporation's Kosai plant in Japan. We are confident with *Jimny* we will be able to enhance our overall exports."

Swift captures pole position in 2020



MARUTI Suzuki *Swift* reinforced its glorious legacy by becoming the best-selling car in calendar year 2020, according to a press release issued by the carmaker.

Backed by Maruti Suzuki's values of trust and reliability, *Swift* has created a benchmark in the industry by being the preferred choice of customers. With its dynamic features, global styling, solid stance and power-packed performance it has surpassed its own records, added the release.

Speaking on the milestone, Mr. Shashank Srivastava, Executive Director (Marketing & Sales), Maruti Suzuki India Limited, said, "Maruti Suzuki *Swift* has been the best-selling premium hatchback in the country for the past 15 years with over 2.3 million delighted customers. Despite the adverse impact of COVID-19, brand *Swift* sold over 160,700 units in CY 2020, emerging as the top brand in the pecking order."

The sporty Maruti Suzuki *Swift* with its global styling and outstanding engine performance is the only car to have won the prestigious Indian Car of the Year (ICOTY) award three times for each of its generation.



Mr. Shashank Srivastava,
Executive Director (Marketing &
Sales), Maruti Suzuki

Hyundai begins export through railway mode



Mr Ganesh Mani (Director-Production, Hyundai Motor India Ltd) and Mr S Subramanian (Additional Divisional Railway Manager, Southern Railway), along with other officials of Hyundai Motor India Ltd and Southern Railways

HYUNDAI Motor India Ltd. on January 13 announced the commencement of its first-ever eco-friendly exports operations through railway mode, with the dispatch of the first consignment of 125 cars to Nepal.

The first export consignment was flagged-off by Mr Ganesh Mani S, Director-Production, Hyundai Motor India Ltd, and Mr S Subramanian, Additional Divisional Railway Manager of Southern Railway, from the Walajabad Railway Hub near the Irungattukkottai-based HMIL production facility outside Chennai.

Commenting on the initiative, Mr Ganesh Mani S said, "Hyundai is committed to eco-friendly initiatives. As a progressive OEM, all our production processes follow green practices for conservation of natural resources. The zero-wastage of water and using over 70 per cent of renewable energy in the HMI plant has set a benchmark in the industry. To further enhance our initiatives following global direction of 'Progress for Humanity', we have commenced our first-ever eco-friendly exports operations through Railways by dispatching 125 cars in 25 rakes in this first consignment to Nepal, reducing Carbon footprint by 20,260 tonnes."

Nissan celebrates Republic Day with 720+ *Magnite SUV* deliveries



NISSAN India celebrates India's 72nd Republic Day with 720+ new Nissan *Magnite SUV* deliveries to customers across dealerships in the country.

This milestone was another step towards fulfilling Nissan India's promise and commitment to the Indian market, said a press release.

On this special occasion, Nissan India also launched the 12th edition of 'Happy with Nissan' aftersales service campaign for a month.

"On the joyous celebration of India's 72nd Republic Day, the Nissan India family commemorated this special occasion with 720+ deliveries of the all-new Nissan *Magnite*, an SUV built on the philosophy of 'Make in India, Make for the World'. We thank our customers for their overwhelming response, our dealer partners for their immense support and congratulate every Indian on this special day!", said Mr Rakesh Srivastava, Managing Director, Nissan Motor India.

Volvo sees strongest second-half sales in company's history

VOLVO Cars reported the strongest second-half sales numbers in the company's history in 2020, as fast-growing demand for its electrified cars boosted the company's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic impact.

According to a press release, the company acted decisively to mitigate the impact of the pandemic during the first half of the year, allowing it to restart its operations quickly after a brief shutdown and embark on a strong recovery, helped by fast-growing demand for its techarge line-up of chargeable cars.

The share of Recharge models, with a fully electric or plug-in hybrid powertrain, more than doubled in 2020 compared to 2019. In Europe, the share of recharge cars of overall sales was 29 per cent, making Volvo the leading brand in the region for chargeable cars. It was also a leading plug-in hybrid brand in the US.



In China and the United States, its two largest individual markets, the company reported growing sales for the full year as it managed to more than recover a pandemic-related sales drop in the first half during the second half of the year.

"We had a great second half of the year after a tough start, gaining market share in all our main sales regions," said Mr Lex Kerssemakers, Head of Global Commercial Operations. "We aim to build on this positive trend in 2021 as we continue to roll out new electrified Volvos and expand our online business."

While sales dropped by 21 per cent in the first half, the company resumed its growth trajectory of recent years in the second half of 2020, reporting solid month-on-month growth from June onwards. Sales rose by 7.4 per cent to 391,751 cars in the second half compared to the same period in 2019.



MINI *Paddy Hopkirk Edition*

A timeless tribute to racing legend launched in India

MINI India introduced a special edition of the MINI 3-door hatch, the *MINI Paddy Hopkirk Edition* in India. Offered as a completely built-up unit (CBU), only 15 units are available for sale in the country.

In 1964, defying all odds, the classic Mini Cooper S clinched the first of three victories at the legendary Monte Carlo Rally. At the wheel was the then 30-year-old Northern Irish rally driver Patrick 'Paddy' Hopkirk in the iconic No. 37 Red Mini Cooper S.

A timeless tribute to the racing legend and his triumph of the Monte Carlo Rally, MINI brings back the iconic No. 37 to the starting line with the *MINI Paddy Hopkirk Edition*, said a press release.

With an exclusive design and equipment features to mark one of the most spectacular achievements in international motorsport history, the *MINI Paddy Hopkirk Edition* is a timeless tribute to the historic moment that defined MINI's racing legacy, added the release.

Mr. Vikram Pawah, President, BMW Group India said, "The *MINI Paddy Hopkirk Edition* is a reflection of MINI's challenger spirit and racing genes. It is a celebration of the ultimate MINI challenger moment – *Paddy Hopkirk's* first Monte Carlo Rally victory in the classic Mini Cooper S. The winning streak at the Monte Carlo Rally continues to inspire MINI fans all over the world to this day. We are delighted to start the New Year with the launch of the *MINI Paddy Hopkirk Edition*, an icon of international motorsports history."

The *MINI Paddy Hopkirk Edition* is available at an ex-showroom price of ₹41,70,000.

EESL signs MoU with NHAI

For EV charging stations, solar power projects and LED lighting at toll plazas



EESL signs MoU with NHAI to set up solar, e-mobility and other energy efficient lighting interventions at NHAI buildings/structures pan-India, in the presence of Mr Rajeev Sharma, Chairman EESL and Mr R.K. Pandey, Member, Projects, NHAI, along with other senior officials from both sides

THE Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture under the Ministry of Power has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Highway Authority of India for the development, maintenance, and management of national highways and to establish various clean energy and energy-efficiency interventions at NHAI structures.

EESL and NHAI have agreed to enter into a special relationship for implementation of energy-efficiency projects, renewable energy projects and e-mobility services as a part of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) to reduce dependence on fossil fuel, reduce emissions and achieve sustainable development all across toll plazas and other NHAI establishments, said a press release.

The MoU was signed in the presence of Mr Rajeev Sharma, Chairman, EESL and Mr RK Pandey, Member- Projects, NHAI, along with senior officials from the two bodies.

As part of the MoU, NHAI will avail PMC services of EESL as on required basis. NHAI will also provide site-related information to EESL, which is required for undertaking the jobs and will support it during the feasibility assessment, along with helping in providing all relevant data as and when required by EESL.

Commenting on the partnership, Mr Saurabh Kumar, Executive Vice-Chairperson EESL group of Companies, said: "Energy demand is increasing rapidly, and India is powering ahead to a sustainability-driven future by adopting energy efficiency initiatives. Availability of adequate charging infrastructure is one of the key requirements for further accelerating EV adoption in India."

Mr Rajat Kumar Sud, Managing Director, EESL, said, "Setting up various charging stations at highways will boost the interest of public commuting from one city to another, enabling a smooth and sustainable transition to a future-oriented mobility solution. Additionally, the installation of LED lighting and solar power plants will help enable energy savings and reduce carbon emissions."

Despite Government subsidy e-2Ws see tepid growth

Near-term outlook largely remains unchanged: ICRA



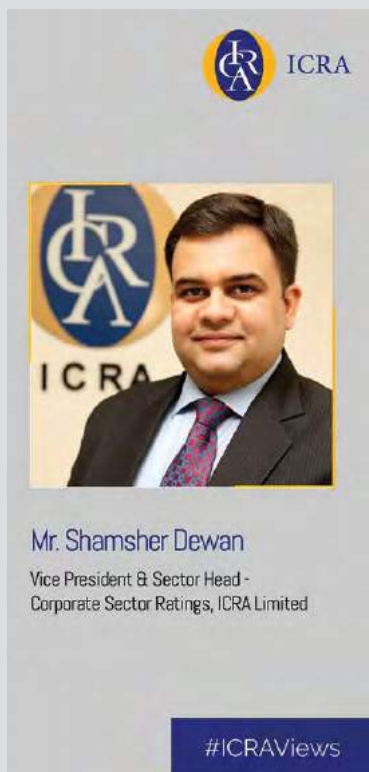
ELECTRIC two-wheelers witnessed tepid growth despite Government's subsidy and the near-term outlook largely remains unchanged, according to an ICRA Survey released on January 8.

Under FAME-II scheme's three-year tenure (FY2020-FY2022, e-2W sales have been only 2 per cent of the targeted 10 lakh unit sales as on September 30 halfway mark

ICRA expects 15-17 per cent Y-o-Y contraction in domestic wholesale 2W volumes in FY2021, amid an evolving pandemic situation, persisting health concerns and economic uncertainties

As per the findings of a nationwide survey of 16 e-2W dealerships in November, the stringent eligibility criteria set for claiming the subsidy under the second phase of Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles (FAME-II) scheme, have been a deterrent – mainly due to a minimum localisation requirement and exclusion of lead-acid based e-2W for subsidy.

Mr. Shamsher Dewan, Vice-President, ICRA, said, "The e-2Ws segment was expected to witness faster penetration among all segments of the automobile market, given the favourable economics and limited reliance on a widespread charging infrastructure. However, e-2W sales vis-à-vis targets set under FAME II have been tepid so far, with the same constituting less than 1 pc of total two-wheelers (2W) sold in FY2020 in India. While the e-2W sales reported a 21 per cent Y-o-Y growth to 1.5 lakh units in FY2020 (first year of scheme) the number of e-2Ws which availed FAME-II subsidy plummeted."



ICRA research was done to understand the ground realities regarding the current challenges and possible drivers for faster e-2W penetration. The key findings were as under:

--Nearly 50 pc of the dealers mentioned that e-2W sales had declined post FAME-II, as the number of models eligible for subsidy under FAME II has declined, indicating the impact of stringent qualifying criteria). Only e-2Ws with advanced (i.e. lithium-ion battery based) are eligible, resulting in all lead-acid battery-based e-2W sales (constituting 70 pc of models available in the market today) being excluded from claiming any demand incentives. Further, the requirement for meeting a minimum 50 pc localised content criterion in a phased manner is tough as li-ion battery accounts for 40-50 per cent of the overall cost of the EV and is the most expensive component in EVs. Due to lack of adequate domestic supply, most of the OEMs are importing the same which could be a possible reason for their ineligibility for claiming the subsidy.

--A third of the walk-in customers lack awareness about the financial incentives offered by the Government on e-2W, while the rest have limited understanding. Apart from higher upfront cost of an e-2W, the potential customers are also concerned about their durability and aftersales services;

--Over 80 per cent dealers in the survey indicated that dominant e-2W customers are those who are looking for a second 2W for the household, mainly for kids and women. With schools and colleges shut because of the



pandemic and limited non-essential movement, it stands to reason then, that purchase of a second vehicle has been deferred in the current fiscal.

--Most consumers continue to prefer low-cost, low-range lead-acid battery powered e-2Ws even when FAME-II demand incentives are available only for advanced battery based (i.e. lithium-ion (li-ion) e-2Ws.

--Nearly 60 pc of the customers are opting for lead-acid based e-2W, because of lower upfront costs vis-à-vis li-ion powered e-2Ws.

Forty-four per cent respondents believed that improvement in battery technology and presence of more participants (and models) has helped in expanding the e-2W market.

--Nearly 80 per cent of the dealers also believed that more financing options could drive faster adoption. Dealers reported that 20-30 pc of their e-2W sales are currently financed; this is lower than 40-50 pc financing enjoyed by conventional 2Ws in India.

--Around 50 pc of the respondents said interest in e-2W increased after announcement of the EV policies by select states, which sweetened the deal in select markets, like Delhi. Demand incentives are currently crucial to sway customers to e-2Ws and hence, the financial incentives under the state EV policies provide incremental impetus for faster EV adoption.

--Overall response indicates that most dealers (80 pc) expect flattish to moderate growth in e-2W sales in FY2021, albeit on a low base. While interest in e-2W amid the pandemic has increased, conversion into sales remains to be seen.



EDel: Mahindra's electric last-mile delivery service



MAHINDRA Logistics Limited (MLL) an integrated third-party logistics (3PL) service provider, on January 7 announced the launch of its cargo last-mile delivery service under the brand name 'EDel'.

Recognised for its 3PL services, MLL enters into new service line of sustainable last-mile logistics and fulfillment with 'EDel' for customers in e-commerce, FMCG and other markets, said a press release.

EDel would initially operate across six major cities, including Bengaluru, New Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad and Kolkata, before expanding to a total of 14 cities in the next 12 months.

EDel will deploy a fleet of EVs starting with 3W vehicles, designed for cargo applications. The fleet will be deployed by MLL in collaboration with its supply partners. MLL will also be establishing a network of dedicated charging infrastructure for its EV operations under EDel with connected telematics platform to enable customer experience, vehicle and battery utilisation and network management.

In Phase 1, EDel is deploying a fleet of 1000 vehicles. The initial focus will be on 3W cargo applications and EDel will primarily utilise the Treo Zor EV by Mahindra Electric.

Commenting on the launch Mr. Rampraveen Swaminathan, Managing Director and CEO, Mahindra Logistics Limited, said, "EDel exemplifies our collective vision of the Future of Mobility – a sustainable ecosystem that brings logistics solutions to customers across the world. Demand for last-mile services continue to grow across India, and we believe electric vehicles provide an ideal long-term solution for the emerging imperatives around sustainability and cost-effectiveness."

E2Go, a low-speed scooter by Odysse

ODYSSE Electric Vehicles, a home-grown electric two-wheeler manufacturing company, has launched a low-speed scooter *E2Go*.

Available in two models of lead-acid and lithium-ion batteries these e-scooters are not only cost-effective to run but don't require any registration or license to drive, said a press release.

The *E2Go* and *E2Go Lite* are priced at ₹52,999 and ₹63,999- respectively (ex-showroom Ahmedabad). The models are available in five colour schemes.

"The *E2Go* is targeted towards the urban women and youth market where everyone wants to have their mobility in their own hands at an affordable entry cost without any hassle of registration process or license" said Mr Nemin Vora, Chief Executive Officer of Odysse Electric Vehicles.

The Odysse *E2Go* comes with a 250 Watt, 60V BLDC motor (Waterproof) electric motor. It has two types of battery options - 1.26 KWH lithium-ion battery or 28AH lead acid battery. Both come with an anti-theft mechanism.

The electric scooter has a top speed of 25 kmph and comes with a range of 60 km on a full charge, which takes about 3.5 to 4 hours.

It has telescopic front forks, and dual spring hydraulic rear shock absorbers. The new Odysse *E2Go* electric scooter also comes with features like reverse gear function, three drive modes, LED speedometer, anti-theft motor locking, keyless entry and USB charging.



Balan launches six EVs with a focus to help rural economy



Mr Jagdish Shettar, Minister of Industries, Karnataka, with Mr Balakrishnan N, Director, Balan Engineering, and Mr Kuljeet Singh Popli, Board Member, Balan Engineering, at the launch of electric vehicles

BALAN Engineering on January 28 launched six variants of electric vehicles to benefit individuals and companies focused on cargo transport, agriculture and civic amenities.

The EVs were unveiled by Karnataka Industries Minister, Mr Jagdish Shettar at Hotel Lalith Ashok in Bengaluru. He was joined virtually by Mr Sadananda Gowda, Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilisers, and Mr Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Road Transport & Highways and MSME.

The EVs that were unveiled included, electric loader-*Vishwas*, electric garbage vehicle-*Swach Rath*, electric passenger rickshaw-*B5*, electric sanitising vehicle, electric fumigation vehicle and electric push cart-*Kamala*.

These are more relevant in boosting rural economy and in large civic corporations and institutions, said a press release. The EVs are durable and sturdy and the company will offer four years' warranty on battery and motor controller.



Electric Fumigation Vehicle

Balan Engineering will be engaged in the manufacture, assembly and sale of various types of electrical vehicles and has received the licence to set up a large manufacturing facility in Bagalkot district of Karnataka.

Currently the production is in Bengaluru with a capacity of about 300-400 vehicles a month. The factory operations will shift to Bagalkot on completion of the factory in six to nine months and the Bengaluru facility will then be converted into the city service centre, added the release.

Speaking at the launch, Mr. Balakrishnan N, Director, Balan Engineering Pvt. Ltd, said, "We will be manufacturing various types of EVs under our own brand as well as for others who are interested to partner with us. Some major players are already in discussion with us for a tie-up of production in their names."



Electric Passenger Rickshaw-B5



Electric Cargo Loader-Vishwas

Hero MotoCorp crosses monumental milestone

100-million cumulative production

HERO MotoCorp, the world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters, on January 21 surpassed the significant milestone of 100 million (10 crore) units in cumulative production.

The 100-millionth bike, *Xtreme 160R*, was rolled out of the company's manufacturing facility in Haridwar.

This is also the 20th consecutive year that Hero MotoCorp has retained the coveted title of the world's largest manufacturer of two-wheelers, said a press release.

Hero MotoCorp's achievement of this landmark is one of the fastest global achievements of the 100 million cumulative production mark, with the last 50 million units coming in a span of just seven years.

Dr Pawan Munjal, Chairman & CEO, Hero MotoCorp, said, "This significant landmark is also an affirmation of the inherent capabilities in India and Hero's Brand appeal. We have been making in India, for the world – and this milestone is an acknowledgment of the customers' preference for Hero across geographies, demographics and generations."

To mark the occasion, Dr Pawan Munjal unveiled six special celebration edition models at the Company's manufacturing facility at Gurugram. The six celebration edition models include *Splendor+*, *Xtreme 160R*, *Passion Pro*, *Glamour (motorcycles)* and *Destini 125*, *Maestro Edge 110* (scooters) – that will go on sale from February 2021.

Addressing a global audience including customers, dealers, distributors, investors, suppliers, employees, customers and the media, Dr. Munjal also outlined Hero MotoCorp's plans and vision for the next five years.



Dr. Pawan Munjal, Chairman and CEO, Hero MotoCorp with global movie icon-Shah Rukh Khan at the unveiling of the company's 100 millionth motorcycle

Hero MotoCorp strengthens presence in Central America



The company has appointed Movesa S.A., as its exclusive distributor in Honduras. Movesa S.A. is one of the most important companies in Honduras with 14 years of experience in the motorcycle market, said the release.

Mr Sanjay Bhan, Head, Global Business, Hero MotoCorp, said "Honduras and Nicaragua are key markets for us in Central America and our expansion plans clearly showcase this. We are also very happy to have partners such as Grupo Casa Pellas and Movesa S.A. who will enable us to expand our footprint in both the countries. Through our new products and extensive customer touch-points, we aim to reach out to the youth in these countries who are looking for premium and stylish two-wheelers."

Hero MotoCorp's product portfolio in Honduras will include two new products – the *XPulse 200* and the new *Hunk 160R* (*Xtreme 160R* in India). The portfolio in Nicaragua will also include the *XPulse 200* and *Hunk 160R*.

Both the *XPulse 200* and *Hunk 160R* have received great customer response in many South American countries, said the release.

HERO MotoCorp has strengthened its presence in Central America by appointing new distributor partners in Nicaragua and Honduras.

The world's largest manufacturer of motorcycles and scooters has lined up a slew of new launches, including its range of premium motorcycles, in both countries, said a press release. The company will also expand its network with extensive customer touch-points and flagship stores in key markets, the release said further.

Grupo Casa Pellas, one of the biggest economic groups and the leading motorcycles, cars and trucks company in Nicaragua with 107 years of experience, has been appointed as the exclusive distributor of Hero MotoCorp in the country.

BharatBenz expands range; introduces eight new CVs



1917R



1015R+



2828 Construction



M-Cab

DAIMLER India Commercial Vehicles (DICV) has introduced eight new products to its range of BharatBenz commercial vehicles.

Since the start of BS-VI sales in April 2020, BharatBenz has almost doubled its market share and increased its network to 250 touch-points across the country. In line with its innovation-driven market focus and commitment to offer customized solutions, BharatBenz's

The company unveiled six new trucks named as BSafe Express (reefer truck for transportation of vaccines), 1917R, 4228R Tanker, 1015R+, 42T M-Cab, and 2828 Construction vehicle. The two new BharatBenz buses to hit the road soon are the wide-body 1017 variant with a seating capacity of up to 50, and the 1624 chassis available with a parabolic suspension.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Satyakam Arya, MD & CEO Daimler India Commercial Vehicles, said, "In today's rapidly-changing environment, it is vital to meet the dynamic needs of society. With this in mind, we proudly introduce BharatBenz's expanded new range with special COVID-prevention features."



4228R Tanker

DICV and Motherson tie up to launch BSafeExpress

A reefer truck to transport COVID vaccines



L to R: Mr. V C Sehgal, Chairman, Motherson Group, Mr. Satyakam Arya, CEO & MD, Daimler India Commercial Vehicles, Mr. L V Sehgal, Vice Chairman, Motherson Group

DAIMLER India Commercial Vehicles (DICV), in collaboration with Motherson Group, in January 22 unveiled 'BSafeExpress', a specialised reefer truck designed for the safe transportation of COVID-19 vaccines.

Equipped with the state-of-the-art connectivity, the BSafe Express uses newly developed refrigeration units that ensure the temperature and stability of the vaccines is accurately monitored and maintained at all stages of delivery.

Mr. Satyakam Arya, Managing Director, and CEO, DICV: "The combination of a strong, reliable chassis with a lightweight, insulated reefer and state-of-the-art connectivity device makes BharatBenz's 'BSafe Express' the perfect solution to India's cold-chain infrastructure challenge. With this truck, we can deliver vaccines in perfect condition to even the most remote destinations, bringing hope of a return to normalcy to over 1.3 billion people." Mr. Vivek Chaand Sehgal, Chairman, Motherson Group said, "Motherson has delivered on its promise of providing a safe and reliable distribution solution for the COVID vaccine.

Motherson Group's refrigerated container (intelligent reefer) is made from Glass Reinforced Plastic, XPS Foam, and other carefully chosen materials that ensure the product is strong, water-resistant, and non-corrosive, yet light-weight and highly insulated. The container can be assembled locally in as little as 96 hours, making it a much more practical solution than conventional products which can take three or more weeks to deliver.

With purpose-built IoT sensors integrated inside the container, fleet managers can monitor temperature, humidity, shock, tilt, and tamper. They can also adjust the temperature as required and sound the alarm if a problem occurs. This further integrates with QR Code tracking of all stock onboard, so that users can check the location, status, and history of each package.

The reefer is mounted on the BharatBenz 2823R chassis, a reliable and safe heavy-duty truck. This ensures maximum uptime and faster turnaround, the two most important characteristics expected of vehicles that carry life-saving medicines.

KTM Adventure Trails across cities



PREMIUM motorcycle brand KTM launched and conducted KTM Adventure Trails across multiple cities.

KTM Adventure Trails are aimed at introducing the owners to adventure biking by taking them on single-day rides exploring exciting trails.

These nature trails have been carefully selected and curated by KTM experts to provide a wholesome riding experience and to impart basic riding techniques of navigating terrains of different kinds, according to a press release issued by the company.

Mr Sumeet Narang, President (Probiking) at Bajaj Auto Ltd, said, "The KTM 390 Adventure and KTM 250 Adventure, which have seen a great response since their launch, would help the customers explore terrains on their bikes which has never been possible with regular street bikes."

KTM Adventure Trails will be regularly conducted in 10 cities across the country over the next few months.



Cobot market set to rebound

To see 20 per cent growth in 2021: Report

LEADING market research company, Interact Analysis, on January 19 released a new report on the collaborative robot market. The report reviews what turned out to be a difficult 2019 and a tumultuous 2020 but gives reason for optimism for the sector from now up to 2028, with significant growth predicted.

As is the case with many industries, COVID-19 has severely affected the short and medium-term outlook for the collaborative robot sector. In 2020 the market saw negative growth for the first time -11.3 pc in revenue terms, and -5.7 pc in shipment terms. Factory and warehouse closures slowed down demand; and customers became more cautious about investment, leading to delays or even cancellations of orders. But Interact Analysis's research indicates that there will be a V-shaped rebound for the industry which will result in growth of nearly 20 pc in 2021, surpassing 2019 market size. Thereafter up to 2028 there will be an annual growth rate of the order of 15-20 per cent.

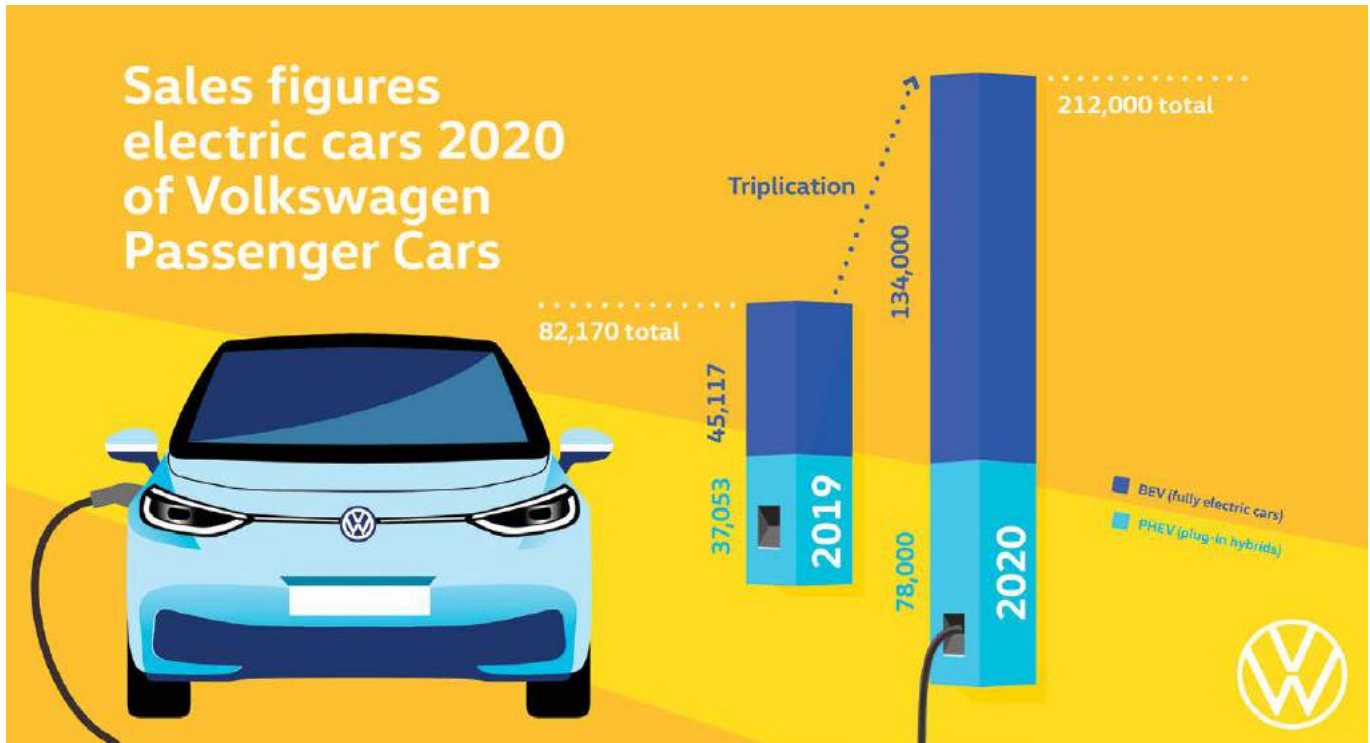
The impact of Covid-19 on the cobot market varies from region to region.

The virus started in the Asian regions and then moved to Europe and North America. As a result, normal business operations and commissioning of automation projects in the Asia-Pacific region will resume earlier than in other regions.

This is important for the cobot market, as over 50 pc of cobots were shipped to Asian countries in 2020. However, only the Chinese and, interestingly, the North American markets are forecast to surpass the size of 2019, mainly due to large domestic demand. China has seen high take-up of cobots because the country, as the world's largest manufacturing base, is suffering from a labour shortage and is in strong need of higher levels of automation to improve production efficiency.

By 2022 all regions are predicted to have exceeded the 2019 market-size, with Western Europe, along with China and North America seeing the fastest growth rates. Mr Jan Zhang, senior director at Interact Analysis, said, "Collaborative robots are still the new kid on the block. Their application potential hasn't been fully exploited yet."

2020 a breakthrough year in e-mobility: Volkswagen CEO



VOLKSWAGEN Passenger Cars has hit the ground running in the transition to electric mobility.

"The year 2020 was a turning point for Volkswagen and marked a breakthrough in electric mobility," said Mr Ralf Brandstatter, CEO of Volkswagen Passenger Cars.

Last year, the brand delivered more electric vehicles worldwide than ever before, handing over more than 2,12,000 electric cars in total (+158 per cent versus 2019), including nearly 1,34,000 battery electric vehicles (+197 per cent versus 2019).

"We are well on track to achieve our aim of becoming the market leader in battery electric vehicles," Mr Brandstatter added.

Despite a challenging market environment, Volkswagen delivered around 5.328 million vehicles across all drive systems to customers around the world. This is a decline of around 15 per cent compared to the previous year.

In the month of December, the brand continued its final sprint toward the end of the year and was only slightly below the very good monthly figures of the previous year with minus two per cent.



Mr Ralf Brandstatter, CEO,
Volkswagen Passenger Cars

Rajnath, Gadkari inaugurate SIAM virtual road safety education gallery



Defence Minister
Mr Rajnath Singh



Minister of Road Transport,
Mr Nitin Gadkari

THE Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) marked the beginning of National Road Safety month with the inauguration of a virtual road safety educative gallery.

Defence Minister Mr Rajnath Singh and Minister of Road Transport & Highways Mr Nitin Gadkari inaugurated the virtual gallery.

The inaugural event was also graced by Dr VK Singh, MP; Mr Amitabh Kant, CEO, Niti Aayog, senior leaders from the ministry and other eminent dignitaries.

The safety gallery is based on guidelines of the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021-2030, which is divided under five sectors capturing different aspects of road safety.

It showcases the projects and awareness drives led by SIAM members, industry stakeholders and multiple other national and international organisations.

Mr. Rajesh Menon, Director General, SIAM said, "SIAM's unique virtual road safety education gallery focuses on distance learning and artificial intelligence to spread the message of road safety. It will help the viewer to explore and understand the amount of road safety work being done by national and international organisations and also implement the learning from these projects for improvement in their respective states."

SIAM suggests affordable finance to boost demand

DURING the second edition of the SIAM Automobile Finance & Insurance Summit themed "Re-Connecting with Customers during Challenging Times", vehicle manufacturers, bankers, financiers and insurance companies deliberated on re-shaping automobile business post-COVID.

All stakeholders identified the need to augment demand with easier and affordable access to finance and insurance as such measures would greatly incentivise customers to reconsider vehicle purchases, which hit all-time low during the first Quarter of FY 21. Various policy recommendations and regulatory issues to address on-ground operational challenges were highlighted.



Mr Rajesh Menon,
DG, SIAM



Mr Diego Graffi, CMD,
Piaggio Vehicles

Mr Rajesh Menon, Director General, SIAM, said, "There is a need to better connect with customers for finance, leasing and insurance which would support in bringing back the auto sector on a sustainable growth path".

Mr Gopal Bansal, Chairman, SIAM Finance and Leasing Group and Whole Time Director & CFO, SML Isuzu, said, "Closer association between auto and finance sector would ultimately benefit the customers".

Mr Diego Graffi, Chairman & MD, Piaggio Vehicles, highlighted that there are several challenges in financing three wheelers and PSU banks need to recommence financing for this segment and three-wheeler manufacturers would provide necessary support as required.

Ampere appoints Kurian as COO, E-Mobility Business



Mr Roy Kurian, Chief Operating Officer

AMPERE Electric on January 20 announced the appointment of Mr Roy Kurian as Chief Operating Officer to head its e-mobility business, with immediate effect.

Prior to joining Ampere, Mr Roy was associated with Yamaha Motors for 17 years as the SVP. Most recently, he was associated with EV startup Tork Motors as Sales and Marketing Head.

Mr Nagesh Basavanhalli, Group CEO and MD, Greaves Cotton, said, "Roy Kurian has joined us to drive next level of growth and further boost our leadership position in the EV segment. We are delighted to have him onboard. With his expertise and rich experience, Roy will help us to strengthen Ampere's leadership position in the country."

Speaking on his appointment, Mr Kurian said, "I am delighted to be part of Ampere Electric family. In my new role, I aim to strengthen Ampere's presence in the electric vehicle segment and achieve leadership position in both electric 2-wheelers and electric 3-wheelers in order to provide sustainable, affordable, reliable last-mile connectivity and contribute to the Government's mission of clean mobility solutions."

Jaya Jamrani appointed V-P (Marketing), Castrol India

CASTROL India Limited announced the appointment of Ms Jaya Jamrani as Vice-President (Marketing) effective January 1 this year.

An alumnus of IIM Lucknow, Ms Jamrani has spent over a decade across various verticals in Castrol both in India and globally, after a stint with Unilever. Her broad-based experience and understanding of changing consumer needs has helped her lead some iconic campaigns for Castrol, said a press release.

Mr Sandeep Sangwan, Managing Director, Castrol India, said, "I am delighted to welcome Jaya as the Vice-President - Marketing for the India business. Along with her strong knowledge of our business and proven ability to drive results, Jaya can be credited with some of our successful purpose-led marketing and influencer-advocacy campaigns in the recent past. I look forward to her contributions as we aim to strengthen our position as a leading lubricants brand in the Indian market."

Ms Jamrani said, "I am humbled by this opportunity to lead marketing for the iconic 100-year young brand that is Castrol. The future promises to be just as exciting as we continue on our transformation agenda with the evolution of lubricants usage and shifts in attitudes towards mobility and convenience."



Ms Jaya Jamrani,
V-P (Marketing)

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