

Small cars should not be squeezed out, says Bhargava

Two-wheeler buyers aspire to own entry-level cars, says Maruti Suzuki chairman

SWARAJ BAGGONKAR Mumbai, August 29

INDIA IS THE world's largest two-wheeler market but with a notably under-penetrated car market, Maruti Suzuki chairman RC Bhargava has said. This gap may widen further if the entry-level car segment gets squeezed out in favour of growth for large, upscale cars...



Some of the regulations which have come...the impact has been adverse on the bottom end of the market. And I am not happy about that because of the impact on the customer.

—RC BHARGAVA CHAIRMAN, MARUTI SUZUKI

The interest of carmakers in the entry-level segment (priced below ₹5 lakh) has dwindled dramatically over the last five years — the primary reason being the natural upshift in preference for feature-rich, spacious and powerful cars instead. This change has led to phasing out of several models from the entry segment.

This market shift, however, will lead to fewer choices for two-wheeler buyers, especially those with families who aspire to progress to small cars, Bhargava said.

There are an estimated 220-230 million registered two-wheelers in the country. The two-wheeler penetration level in India is estimated at 160 per 1,000 people, while for cars it is 25 per 1,000 people — among the lowest in the world.

India is very under-penetrated when it comes to personal mobility. A country cannot move

primarily on two-wheelers. They are not an efficient form of commuting. They are unsafe and not suitable for families. We are the only country in the world where the bulk of the people move on two-wheelers. The car industry has to move up, otherwise the whole effort (to improve) the quality of life of the people will not succeed," Bhargava told FE at an event held recently to mark 40 years of Maruti Suzuki.

Hyundai Santro, Hyundai Eon, Datsun Go, Mahindra KUV100 and Tata Nano were some entry-level models that were pulled out from the market over the last 5-6 years. This has left just Maruti Alto, Maruti S-Presso and Renault Kwid.

From 13% in FY18, the share of the entry (mini) segment in India's passenger vehicle (PV) industry fell to 7.76% in FY22, data from the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) show.

"I don't like a situation where a large mass of people, who have decades of an aspiration of moving up, are finding their dreams

going further away," he said.

In the past two years, car prices have moved up by 15-22% on account of a surge in costs such as raw material, freight and other inputs. Meeting the new regulatory norms has also led to a rise in costs.

The pressure has been the most severe on the price-sensitive, entry-level buyer where a car priced at ₹3.75 lakh in 2019 is now priced around ₹4.5 lakh. In addition, the increase in petrol costs may have forced the entry-segment buyer to stay within the two-wheeler segment, market experts said.

"Some of the regulations which have come, the impact of that has been adverse on the bottom end of the market. And I am not happy about that because of the impact on the customer," Bhargava added.

Maruti Suzuki tried to infuse new life into the segment with the launch of the updated Alto, its entry-level car, earlier this month. At the launch, the company also said the model is getting bookings of 200 per day.

Asked Chinese firms to raise exports from India: MoS IT

New Delhi, August 29

THE GOVERNMENT HAS asked Chinese mobile companies to increase their exports from India and there is no proposal to ban the sale of handsets below ₹12,000 made by such firms, Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Monday.

The minister of state (MoS) for electronics and IT also said Indian companies also have a role to play in the country's electronic ecosystem but it does not mean exclusion of foreign brands.

"Only issue that we have raised and done very transparently with some of the Chinese brands is that we have said that our expectation is that they will do more exports.

"Their supply chain, specially components supply chain, need



MoS IT Rajeev Chandrasekhar also clarified Chinese phones below ₹12K won't be banned

to be more transparent and much more open... (On) the other narrative about crowding them out from a particular segment (sub-₹12,000) of the market, we don't have any proposal and I am not sure where it came from," he said.

He was responding to a ques-

tion on a reported plan of the government to bar Chinese companies from selling sub-₹12,000 mobile phones.

Releasing a report prepared by Icrier in collaboration with industry body ICEA on increasing domestic value addition, the minister said the government is looking to reach \$300 billion-electronics production and exports of \$120 billion by 2025-26. The present production is estimated around \$76 billion.

"In our scheme of things, there is space for Indian brands. In our electronics supply chain, Indian brands, Indian entrepreneurs also have a role to play. It is not about exclusion of foreign suppliers or foreign brands but we believe it is our policy and the government of India's obligatory duty to build Indian brands," he said.

Not renaming Zomato 'Eternal', says Goyal

FE BUREAU Bengaluru, August 29

ZOMATO FOUNDER AND CEO Deepinder Goyal on Monday said the company has no plans to rename itself 'Eternal'.

"The attempt was only to rebrand itself internally, Goyal said in a filing on the BSE. "...Eternal remains an internal identity — it is currently only a notion to bind all our different businesses and leaders under a common name and a mission, and there is NO plan whatsoever to rebrand the Zomato app to 'Eternal,' Goyal said.

At present, the Gurugram-based company has three divisions: Zomato, its food delivery business; Blinkit, the quick-

commerce app; and Hyperpure, the arm that supplies ingredients to restaurants.

Ever since a Slack note by Goyal to Zomato staff made its way to the wider public, he has also been asked if the rebranding could possibly mean he was setting the stage to move away from day-to-day operations.

Allaying shareholders' concerns, he said, "The simple straight answer to this is NO. I am as excited about continuing to build Zomato... I believe that Zomato is my life's work and the hardest (and the most fulfilling) part of the journey is still ahead of me. This announcement does not change anybody's roles and responsibilities (including and particularly mine) at Zomato."



Deepinder Goyal, CEO, Zomato

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L&T arm bags 5-yr deal from BMW

FE BUREAU Bengaluru, August 29

L&T TECHNOLOGY SERVICES (LTTS), the engineering services arm of L&T Group, said on Monday it has bagged a five-year, multi-million-dollar deal from European luxury vehicle maker BMW Group to provide high-end engineering services for the company's suite of infotainment "consoles targeted for its family of hybrid vehicles.

The financial details of the deal were not disclosed.

"The large deal was awarded to LTTS because of its deep domain expertise and engineering leadership in transportation technologies and LTTS' proven ability to offer unique opportunities to scale up existing projects and work on new ones," the company said in a statement.

FROM PG 1

Carlsberg to axe India unit board members in 2019 row

"Our JV partner is entitled to nominate replacements for as long as the JV is still existing," Carlsberg said in the statement.

Asked for comment on Monday, a representative for C P Khetan, who manages the Khetan Group's input into the board, said there have been 'disagreements with Carlsberg's management of the joint venture', declining to elaborate further due to confidentiality issues. Carlsberg India's local auditor has twice declined to give an opinion on its financials in recent years, citing the views of the three Khetan board members who repeatedly alleged regulatory lapses.

Carlsberg has denied wrongdoing, but has also said in the past it "cannot rule out breaches of our policies and code of conduct."

Carlsberg India is one of the country's biggest beer companies, with a market share of about 17%. —Reuters

SBI Human Resources Department State Bank Bhavan, 16th Floor, Madame Cama Road, Mumbai - 400021 REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL State Bank of India has issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) No: SBI/CDO/CMD/RFP/2022-23/02, dated: 30.08.2022, for shortlisting of Consultant/s as specified in the RFP. For details please visit 'Procurement News' at Bank's Website https://bank.sbi

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT MUMBAI INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN BIDDING PROCESS FOR NON-AERO CONCESSIONS AT CSMI AIRPORT Mumbai International Airport Limited ("MIAL") invites parties to participate in the competitive bidding process for Non-Aero Concessions at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport ("CSMIA"), Mumbai.

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