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Bevy of launches heralds 11th Auto Expo by Rocky Singh

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â€¢ Fleet of gleaming cars unveiled by leading car manufacturers

â€¢ Two-wheeler manufacturers make a big splash with new launches

â€¢ Day 1 observed as Goodwill Day for the differently-abled to visit the show

The 11th Auto Expo 2012 has begun its over a week-long sojourn in New Delhi with a slew of launches that marked the debut of many automobile manufacturers into new segments of the dynamic Indian vehicle market. The showcase combined state-of-the-art technology and innovation to deliver models high on performance and unique in design.

As many as 13 car makers unveiled their vehicles amid intense international media coverage at the 11th Auto Expo, which is being jointly organized by Automotive Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), from 5-11 January 2012 at Pragati Maidan, New Delhi, India.

On conclusion of the first day of media preview of the Auto Expo, CII Director General Chandrajit Bannerjee expressed his satisfaction and said the organizers are maintaining a close interaction with all stakeholders of the show and are leaving no stone unturned in making the automobile carnival a stupendous success.

â€œThe number of new models launched at the 2012 Auto Expo underlines the robust growth of the Indian auto market and the position it has attained on the global auto industry map. With 50 launches across several categories, the 11th Auto Expo is expected to infuse more optimism in the industry. Indiaâ€™s automotive industry is well-positioned for resurgence in growth, catering to both domestic and international markets. Post the expo, we expect vehicle sales to sustain their momentum, especially with a large number of new launches at the show, and register double digit sales for all the companiesâ€•, he added.

Four-wheelers hog limelight

The countryâ€™s largest car maker Maruti Suzuki unveiled its compact SUV XA Alpha. Keeping in view the promising growth rate of the SUV segment in India, Shinzo Nakanishi, Managing Director and CEO, opined that the new model will help retain Maruti Suzukiâ€™s stronghold on the automobile industry in the country. While Maruti Suzuki kick-started its display with the XA Alpha, it also plans to launch the Ertiga alongside other new models.

Targetting the premium car sector, car maker Hyundai showcased a new version of Sonata, which is expected to be launched in India by February end. With a graceful design inspired by the orchid flower, the new Hyundai Sonata is luxury on wheels with its impressive contours and lush interiors.

Japanese auto major Nissan Motor Company today unveiled the seven-seater Evalia. With a stately, imposing design and the promise of superior comfort, the Evalia is Nissanâ€™s new entry into the multipurpose vehicle division.

Close on the heels of the success of its Figo, Ford drew back the covers off its global compact SUV Ecosport, as it envisions India to lead the companyâ€™s growth worldwide in the coming years. EcoSport is the second of eight new global models that Ford proposes to unveil in India over the

next 3-5 years.

Celebrating its success in the Indian luxury car market, German car manufacturer Audi displayed the compact SUV - Audi Q3, the new futuristic A3 e-tron concept, the Audi S6 limousine, the powerful Audi Q7 V12 and some highlights from the existing Audi India product range.

Novelty seems to be the forte of Toyota as it launched the new Land Cruiser 200 coupled with the new Innova and Fortuner. The Land Cruiser 200 is proof of Toyotaâ€™s technical competence as the makers have reworked the exteriors and included new headlamps and foglamps, a new radiator grill and the front bumper. Toyota has also unveiled the new Camry which was the highlight of its display.

Two- wheelers put up a big show

After 10 years of launching the Thunderbird, Motorcycle maker Royal Enfield today unveiled its completely redesigned model Thunderbird 500 which will hit the Indian roads later in the year. Faster than its predecessor and with efficient ergonomics, the 500cc variant of the Thunderbird promises an exciting and comfortable ride. The Thunderbird lives up to its reputation of being the adventure bikerâ€™s favourite with enhanced features.

Taking advantage of the 70% stake enjoyed by 100-125cc two-wheelers in the Indian vehicle scenario, Suzuki introduced the 125cc scooter, Swish and the 110cc motorcycle, Hayate. With plans to emerge as a leading player in this segment and to avail of higher margins, Suzukiâ€™s current focus is on the scooter arena. However, it has not discounted the possibility of unveiling more 150cc models.

India Yamaha Motor, today, marked its entry into the scooter segment as it displayed its new scooter concept, the Yamaha Ray, designed for the Indian woman. With this, Yamaha marks its foray into all spectrums of the two-wheeler category. Celebrating 50 years of its association with MotoGP, Yamaha also exhibited its YZR M1 and YZF R1.

Other scooters on display are from the ASEAN market and include the Mio, Fino and Xeon. The bikes that are on display comprise of YZR M1, YZF R15 Version 2.0, FZ1, legendary VMAX and FZ-S, Fazer, SZ Series, YBR 125 and Crux.

Mahindra and Mahindra, revealed the Ssangyongâ€™s Rexton SUV, which is likely to be launched in India by mid-2012. Apart from Rexton, Mahindra also displayed two concept cars, the new XIV 1 SUV concept and Ssangyong Actyon Sports.

Targeted at bike enthusiasts, Honda has launched the150cc Honda CBR150R, a variant of the 250cc CBR250R. Honda also eyes the mass market with its new Dio scooter and the Dream Yuga motorbike. Flaunting a sleek design and a 10% increase in power owing to the 110cc engine, the revamped Dio offers stiff competition to its counterparts from the same segment.

US cult bike maker Harley Davidson launched two locally-assembled models FXDB Street Bob and FXDC Super Glide Custom.

ACMAâ€™s Campaign against Counterfeiting

Apart from multiple launches from automobile manufacturers, the Asli Naqli pavilion, an awareness campaign against counterfeits set up by ACMA was inaugurated by Mr Ambuj Sharma, Jt Secretary, Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises today. The pavilion will also have an IPR Cell, which is the first initiative of its kind to offer advisory to an exhibiting company against display of its counterfeits by any infringing company.

On the occasion, Mr Arvind Kapur, President, ACMA, said, â€œ36 percent share of parts sold in the replacement market are counterfeit products, raising concern and emphasizing the need for road safety and prevention of road accidents. Around 20 per cent of all road accidents in India are

directly or indirectly attributed to the use of counterfeit automotive parts (as per ACMA â€“ E&Y Study).

The Asli-Naqli show will see sixteen leading component manufacturers participating to create awareness against counterfeits and will display the difference between genuine and fake products to promote the industryâ€™s fight against counterfeits.â€• He also urged the public to support the initiative and visit the pavilion.

Another key highlight of ACMAâ€™s Campaign against Counterfeiting is the national seminar on Brand Protection through IPR management to be held during the Auto Expo 2012. This seminar will highlight the issue of Grey imports and border-related measures to curb import of counterfeit auto parts.

The first day of the exposition was reserved exclusively for the media. The day was also designated as Goodwill day for the differently-abled to visit the show and drew visitors from various institutes for a special guided tour of the show.

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Indiaâ€™s auto industry reported a growth in as aspects be it passenger cars, Utility vehicles, Vans/ MPVâ€™s, two wheelers, commercial Vehicles, Three wheelers. This edition of auto expo would strive to boost the auto sector in spite of negatives growth in the passenger vehicle and three wheeler segment in the last quarter of 2011 the auto expo thus begins with a positive note for the Industry.

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