

India is a future growth market particularly in SUV segment: Volvo CEO

Nandini.Sengupta
@timesgroup.com

Gothenburg, Sweden: He is credited with being the man behind

Volvo Cars global turnaround and **Håkan Samuelsson**, president and chief executive of Volvo



Cars globally, is a man of sharp focus. For the world, he is focused on hitting 8,00,000 vehicles by 2020 and a cumulative 1 million electric vehicles by 2025. For India it means expanding local footprint with tight cost considerations and taking the fight for the luxury car market to the German big three. In an interview with TOI, he talked about his global and local strategy. *Excerpts:*

Volvo Cars has recently unveiled a brand new architecture called the Compact Modular Architecture which has spawned the XC40 compact crossover. Given India's fascination for the compact SUV, will that model come to India and be assembled in India?

We start our local assembly in India with the XC90 but we are definitely not excluding other models. We launched the XC90 two years ago, we're launching the XC60 globally now and the CMA-based XC40 later and all of these could be of interest to India. We see India as a future growth market particularly in the SUV segment.

Volvo Group — the truck and bus maker former sister company whose factory facilities you will be using for assembling cars in India — has

an engine sourcing alliance with Eicher. Will Volvo Cars make use of synergies like those as well going forward? It is too early to talk about that. Further localisation will require higher numbers of domestic sales in India which is when we will look at those options.

ONE-ON-ONE

Volvo Cars is aggressively pursuing the electric vehicle option. Will India be part of those plans?

India will be a very good market for that because there is a lot of interest in new technology and electric technology we feel will do well there.

Will Volvo Cars get out of diesel vehicles in future?

We have just launched a new generation of diesel engines but long-term we are commit-

ted to electrification. We have said we want to do 1 million electric vehicles by 2025 and developing a new generation of diesels around that time frame sounds very unlikely. So we are not going to develop another new diesel platform in the future.

To what extent is your electric focus the result of the Tesla factor?

I wouldn't see them as competitors but they are a fresh wind to the business. They have opened up a whole discussion about the future of automotive technology. We should give Tesla credit for that but they are still small and our main competition are the traditional premium car brands like Mercedes Benz, Audi and BMW.

(This correspondent is in Gothenburg, Sweden at the invitation from Volvo)