

Hindustan Motors unveils rural transport vehicle prototype

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New Delhi, Aug 19: Hindustan Motors unveiled the first prototype of the rural transport vehicle (RTV) here on Tuesday. The RTV prototype has been designed and built by the OKA Motor Company, Australia's fifth-largest vehicle manufacturer.

The RTV is a multi-purpose, rough terrain, forward control, heavy duty vehicle designed to transport both goods and people.

Speaking at a press conference, Hindustan Motors' executive director, A Sankara Narayanan said "The company's RTV is the world's first purpose designed vehicle based on low volume, mass customisation manufacturing technology. We entered into an agreement with OKA Motor Company two years ago. The vehicle was then developed after market research to meet the specific requirements of both usage and road conditions." The vehicle is expected to hit the roads by April 1998. It will be manufactured at the company's existing plant in Indore. The RTV has a 3.5 tonne GVW (gross vehicle weight). To begin with, 600 units would be produced. The investment in the project is around Rs 40 crore. Significantly, the company has approached the government for concessions as the vehicle serves a rural need. It has asked the government to review the excise duty structure on RTVs. The company has also sought sales tax relief from the Madhya Pradesh government.

Narayanan also added that the OKA and Hindustan Motors would be jointly promoting exports of RTVs with some changes to Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and other south-east Asian countries after about three years. Hindustan Motors executive vice-president R Santhanam said the RTV has been specially designed to meet the transportation and road conditions of rural India and is geared to negotiate the rough and unpredictable terrain with ease. The RTV is indigenised to almost 99 per cent.

OKA Motor Company chief executive officer (CEO) Mike Walker said "the RTV product concept has been evolved based on extensive market research in rural India. The Hindustan Motors RTV is the world's first purpose made vehicle designed specifically for the Indian customer's needs". OKA is known for high performance, rugged specialty vehicles catering to Australia's mining, tourism and the military vehicle industry. Hindustan Motors is also in the process of upgrading its Ambassador and Contessa models. The upgradation on the Ambassador will cost around Rs 80 crore under which the gear boxes, brakes suspension, seating and the engine will be modernised. The mileage is expected to increase by 15 to 20 per cent.