

Harley back in saddle: Rides with Hero for ‘most affordable’ bike

First co-developed model likely to go on sale by end of FY24

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Mumbai, 15 November

Two years after it hitched a ride with Hero MotoCorp (Hero), Harley-Davidson (Harley) and the Pawan Munjal-led firm are gearing up to ride into the middleweight (midweight) motorcycle segment (350-850cc) in the world’s largest two-wheeler market.

To be rolled out under the Harley and Hero brands, the first co-developed model is likely to go on sale by the end of 2023-24 (FY24) separately through the sales channels of the two brands, said people in the know. This will be the first of the range of premium models Hero and Harley are co-developing. “Over the next two-year time

frame, you will see models in the volume and profitable segments of the premium, as well as the platform we are developing jointly with Harley,” Niranjan Gupta, chief financial officer, Hero MotoCorp, said at an investor call on November 4.

The two partners are in “advanced stages of developing the midweight category premium motorcycle”, which will be launched in the Indian market by the end of FY24, said one of the persons referenced earlier.

An email sent to Harley’s Asia-Pacific headquarters in Bangkok on Saturday remained unanswered until Tuesday evening. A spokesperson for Hero declined to comment.

The midweight segment — which

includes bikes in the 350-850cc category priced over ₹1.5 lakh — is dominated by Royal Enfield. The motorcycle-making arm of Eicher Motors corners over 75 per cent of the market.

The new model will be Harley’s most affordable offering. This will be the second attempt by the Milwaukee-based motorcycle maker in the affordable mass segment. The first one was the Street 750cc and the Street Rod. Both models were discontinued in 2021.

In its current line-up for the Indian market, Harley’s lowest priced model is the Iron 883 priced at ₹11.97 lakh (ex-showroom), while the most expensive is the Road Glide Special at ₹37.17 lakh.

Given the huge traction the midweight

segment has seen in the past years, it is a sweet spot for every manufacturer, be it Bajaj-Triumph, TVS-BMW or Hero Harley, said an industry veteran.

For a successful innings, it is critical that Harley positions the upcoming model in a manner that its brand doesn’t get diluted and it is not seen as a “cheap Harley”, he remarked.

With its partnership with the two-wheeler market leader paying off, the iconic all-American motorcycle maker is hoping to make a comeback in India. Led by a revamped sales network and intense marketing and customer-con-

nect initiatives, Harley has regained its market leadership in the 1,000cc and above segment in India. It has been riding high on the success of the Pan America 1250 Special and the Sportster S motorcycles.

Albeit on a small base, Hero has sold a total of 287 units of Harley motorcycles in the 1,000cc and above segment in the first 10

months of the current calendar year, mostly driven by the Pan America 1250 Special and the Sportster S motorcycles. It has raced ahead of Triumph Motorcycles India, which sold 276 units, Kawasaki 188 units, Suzuki Motorcycle India 209 units, and Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India 66 units in the 1,000cc-plus category, according to data reported by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM).

Hero took over the distribution of Harley motorcycles, parts, accessories, and merchandise in India in October 2020 after the American company decided to shut operations in the country.



CROWDED FIELD

6,700-7,000

Monthly sales of middleweight motorcycles

47,064

No. of mid-segment bikes sold (April-October)

₹1.8 lakh

Starting range of mid-segment bikes

Harley’s lowest-priced model in India currently is **Iron 883** (pictured) priced at ₹11.97 lakh (ex-showroom)