

# Honda set to join 2-wheeler EV race by March next year

DEEPAK PATEL

New Delhi, 23 January

Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI), the country's second-largest two-wheeler manufacturer, is planning to launch its first electric vehicle (EV) here by March next year, said CEO & MD Atsushi Ogata on Monday.

The firm would enter the low-end motorcycle market in March by launching a 100cc engine bike at a price that will "positively shock" customers, he said while speaking with reporters, after launching the Activa with Honda Smart Key.

HMSI's first EV, an electric scooter, will have a fixed battery and the second model will have two swappable batteries, Ogata explained. "The company started working on the

first model around six months ago... It will have a top speed of about 50 km per hour," he said.

Relatively new firms, such as Ola Electric, Hero Electric, Okinawa, and Ather, are the top four players in the electric two-wheeler market with about 60 per cent market share.

At a time when established two-wheeler makers Bajaj Auto, Hero MotoCorp, and TVS Motors have already launched their electric scooters, Ogata said HMSI is not late in developing and launching its EVs.

He said in the past three years, the company has focused on developing a strong constitution (fundamentals) by

taking steps, such as centralising HMSI's functioning from its Manesar office.

"Our market share in total two-wheeler sales in India is at its highest because of a very strong portfolio, efficient dealership network, etc. So, it (launching an EV) was not an urgent matter from a business point of view," he said.

Now, he further said, the company is entering into a new business operation (EVs), so it comes with a long-term mindset of about 10-20 years.

Ogata mentioned that the platform for the new electric scooter would be new (and not developed by converting an

existing ICE vehicle to an electric scooter) to satisfy the Indian customers' needs, which are different from other countries. "It will be completely new," the top executive said. HMSI is not focusing on developing electric motorcycles right now.

"We will be ready with our first electric scooter by March 2024 for the Indian domestic market," Ogata said. Honda is currently selling its electric two-wheelers in China and its home market in Japan and it is soon going to start selling them in Europe. "We are concentrating on designing and developing specifications for an electric two-wheeler that is for the Indian market," he said, adding that this EV will be exported to countries "if they want to have it".

**Honda will launch a 100cc bike to compete with Hero MotoCorp, Bajaj Auto and TVS in low-end segment**