

SLEW OF NEW PRODUCTS, FACELIFTS IN THE OFFING

# Renault to reboot India ops

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**AFTER BRINGING ALL** its domestic operations under one roof, French carmaker Renault is making a renewed push for volume growth in India.

By September, Renault's India entities which control manufacturing, design and research and development (R&D), will have a common umbrella entity called Renault Group India. The change is part of a broader restructuring programme involving its global partner, Nissan.

"With the integration of all the three companies, the decision-making capability of the Renault Group increases dramatically," Venkatram Mamillapalle, managing director, Renault India, told FE during an interaction. This will allow Renault to adapt to consumer changes faster with regards to choice of fuel and vehicle body shape while also adhering to the

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MD, RENAULT INDIA

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regulatory requirements prescribed by the government, he said. Changes such as switching to electric and hybrid vehicles are gaining traction in India, the world's third-largest automotive market. Besides, emission norms are getting tighter under the upcoming Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) guidelines.

A few weeks ago, Renault opened a design centre in Chennai, which is its largest outside of France. The centre will play a pivotal role in shaping vehicles destined not just for India but for global markets as well.

Renault recently appointed former chief executive of its Korea operations, 52-year-old Stephane Deblaise, to head the India operations. Deblaise will report to Francois Provost, Renault Group chief of procurement, partnerships and public affairs officer.

In the January-June period, India was last on the list of Renault's top 15 global markets, with sales of 16,000 units. As per data shared by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), the brand had less than 1% market share in the

domestic segment.

As part of the partnership realignment plans with Nissan, Renault will assume full control of the 400,000 units-a-year manufacturing plant near Chennai. The plant was jointly owned by the Japanese manufacturer to the tune of 51%. These developments, though, have not brought any changes to Renault and Nissan's investment plan for India.

"As alliance partners, (Nissan) will also invest and we both will go ahead with the investment of ₹600 million, there is no change in the plan. We said four products

from this investment -- two each for both companies -- and we are sticking to that plan," Mamillapalle said. Independent of these new products, Renault will introduce facelifts and upgrades to its existing portfolio under a revamped Renault logo. The first of these products -- Renault Triber -- made its debut on Wednesday at ₹6.29 lakh (ex-showroom).

The seven-seater, which competes against the larger Maruti Suzuki Ertiga, has been given 35 updates, including a redesigned front and rear look and an all-new dashboard.

"The 'four product plan' is not the end of the story. More products will come and we will have further investments. Triber is the first product from that plan," he added. Though Mamillapalle declined to provide details, market sources say that the return of the Duster SUV and its bigger cousin Bigster is on the cards. Nissan will get its own versions of the two products.