

Hopeful that 2022 will be our best year ever: Mercedes-Benz India's new chief

S RONENDRA SINGH

New Delhi, August 29

Country's largest luxury carmaker, Mercedes-Benz India, on Monday announced the appointment of Santosh Iyer, currently the Vice-President, Sales and Marketing, as the new MD & CEO from January 2023. Iyer is the first Indian and the youngest to get this position since the Germany-headquartered company started its operations here in 1994. He has played an important role in the company's sales achievements like a record sales of 7,573 new cars in the first half of this year, amid market challenges. In his first interview after the announcement, Iyer shared his thoughts with *BusinessLine*. Excerpts:

What will be your priorities as the new head of Mercedes-Benz India?

I have three clear priorities — enhance customer loyalty further and transform Mercedes-Benz into the most desirable luxury brand in the country, across luxury products; keep driving a profitable and sustainable business with our fantastic and industry-best franchise partners; and enhance Mercedes-Benz India's 'people first' policies even more, and make the organisation diverse and attractive to young employees, by promoting meritocracy and potential talent.

As Mercedes Benz India focuses on electric mobility, what is your thought process?

Electric is the future and we

“ Have three priorities — enhance customer loyalty and transform Mercedes-Benz into most desirable luxury brand; keep driving profitable business; enhance company's 'people first' policies

SANTOSH IYER
Newly-appointed MD & CEO,
Mercedes-Benz India



have a clear timeline to shift to climate neutral product portfolio - by the end of this decade. In India, we are accelerating our EV journey with three new EVs in the August-December period. To support our customers, we will set-up India's

largest OEM network of 'ultra-fast charging network'. There is also industry-first 10 years' battery warranty on the EQS 53 (launched last week).

How do you anticipate Mercedes' participation in

the Aatmanirbhar Abhiyan and Make in India?

Mercedes-Benz has already been making in India since 1994 and there are over 1,50,000 'Made in India' Mercedes on road. That in itself is a strong testimony of our localisation efforts. We already make 13 world-class products from the Chakan (Pune) facility. With 'Made in India EQS', we will now set new benchmark in 'local manufacturing' of luxury EVs and transition towards a digitised and decarbonised future.

On Sunday, the Prime Minister said EVs will be a silent revolution in future. Your comments.

We believe there will be a 'silent revolution' by end of this decade. There is forecast that 25 per cent of our sales in the next five years will be from lux-

ury EVs and we are confident that the EV roadmap will be aggressive and the tipping point is nearer than expected. Mercedes-Benz India is already leading the luxury car industry for many years now.

How do you see this year's festival season performance? Will it be another record breaking season?

It's exciting to be on top of customers' preference list for eight years in a row and we thank our loyal customers and our franchise partners for that trust. This year, we are ringing the festival season early, due to the ongoing semi-conductor shortage and delayed deliveries. To honour customer deliveries, we are requesting them to order their purchases from July itself. We are hopeful that 2022 will be our best year ever.