

Suzuki Motor Celebrates Opening Of Thai Plant

The Associated Press

RAYONG, Thailand, Nov. 12 (Kyodo) — Osamu Suzuki, president and chairman of Suzuki Motor Corp., said Monday his company aims to produce 100,000 vehicles at its new plant in the eastern Thai province of Rayong in 2016.

"This facility will complement a plant in Indonesia as a major foothold in Southeast Asia," Suzuki said at the opening ceremony of the Thai plant, which already started production of the Swift compact hatchback "eco-car" in March as the company's first car production foothold in Thailand.

His comments came after the company announced its withdrawal from the U.S. auto market, indicating its policy of putting emphasis on the Asian market.

As the most recent entrant in the Thai market among major Japanese carmakers, Suzuki "will have to scramble to catch up with other makers...The situation is quite different from India (where Suzuki is the top seller)," said the company chief.

Suzuki plans to turn out some 21,000 units of the Swift at the Thai plant this year, of which 17,000 will be sold in the country.

Japanese carmakers have established footholds in Thailand as important export bases. Car sales in Thailand are expected to expand to about 1.4 million units this year from about 790,000 last year.

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