

# CHANGE OF FORTUNE



## Will there be one for Toyota's Fortuner? Because there's the whiff of a very fresh **Pajero Sport** baking at Mitsubishi

**T**he last time we spoke to a Hindustan Motors (HM) executive about upcoming products from the Mitsubishi stable, he told us, "With the refreshed Mitsubishi Outlander out of the way, we'll now concentrate on the Pajero Sport".

That conversation happened some time in 2010. Since then the world has changed quite a bit. Gaddafi was killed in public, the world's population touched seven billion, Suresh Kalmadi is out on bail, Sharad Pawar got slapped and the gentleman who gave us this valuable information has left HM. And still no Pajero Sport out on the road.

Now though, there are some strong indications from HM, again, that the Pajero Sport is due out soon. How soon? March, 2013? Nah, 2012. What's that? Of course, you put that Toyota Fortuner buying plan on hold. Come on. It's just one month.

So, yes, the Pajero Sport. Unlike the Pajero, which has been around since the Big Khans of Bollywood were in their teens, the all-new Pajero Sports is, well, all-new and has nothing in common with the current Pajero. Except the name. Like the Toyota Fortuner that is based on the Hilux pickup platform, the Pajero Sport shares its underpinnings with the L200 pickup truck. This platform has just gone through a thorough revision recently, and is a light year or so ahead of the Pajero

in every way.

India will get a 2.5-litre common-rail diesel unit, which'll make 134bhp and 314Nm of torque. This should be enough to push the two-tonne SUV around. It might lose out to the Fortuner in outright performance, but we wouldn't bet on it. What we would bet on is that Mitsubishi's chassis dynamics are usually way above Toyota's. So we wouldn't fret much over a few horses. Besides, with a smaller capacity engine, the Pajero Sport might be a bit more fuel-efficient than the Fortuner.

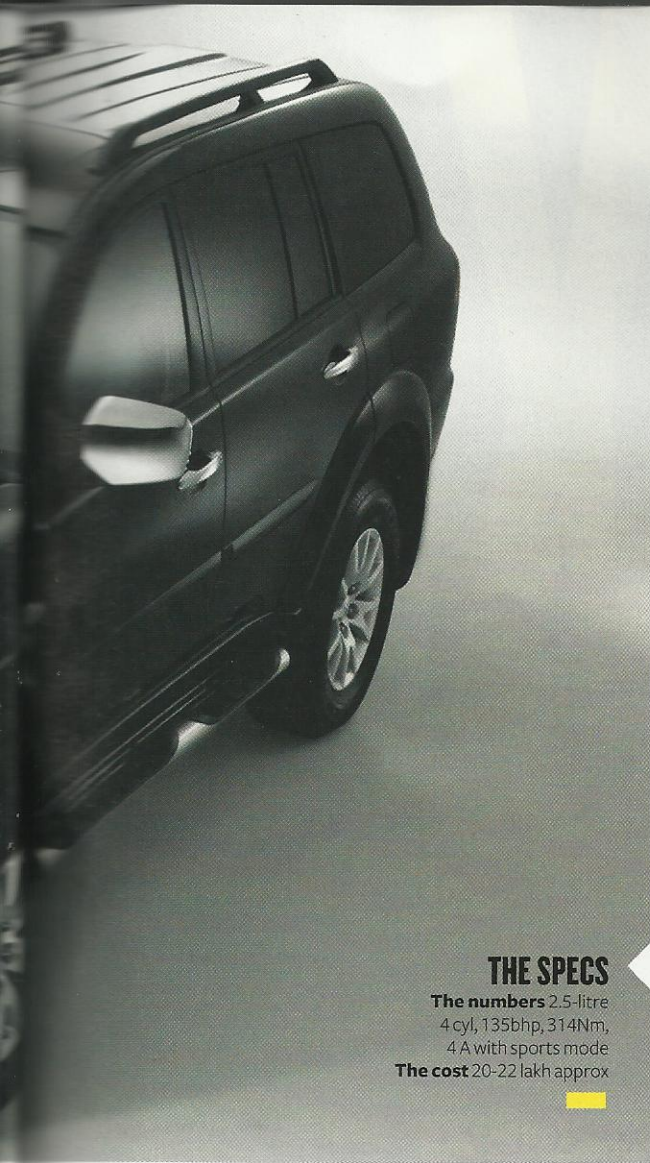
The front gets that typical Mitsubishi rally sport treatment. So if you're looking for that rugged people-mover front, look elsewhere. The side is pretty boxy. And the taillights are inspired. Which may not sound good, but if your taillight inspiration is from an Alfa Romeo, well, no harm done at all.

One thing we deeply appreciate is the abject lack of overdone chrome on the Pajero Sport. Sure, us Indians seem to love bling and chrome, and we guess the higher variants of the Pajero Sport might even have some, but please Mitsubishi, keep it optional and don't fall for the Fortuner temptation.

The black-and-beige inside is one of the best interiors we've seen in this segment yet. And after the Outlander, we do think Mitsubishi does classy, sporty interiors. But will HM fall for the typical



**"This platform having just gone through a comprehensive revision, is a light year or so ahead of the Pajero in every way"**



**THE SPECS**  
**The numbers** 2.5-litre  
 4 cyl, 135bhp, 314Nm,  
 4 A with sports mode  
**The cost** 20-22 lakh approx

consumer demand for wood and chrome inside? If it does, we hope it keeps it optional.

Other goodies include the bright red ignition button, abundant cargo space and flexible seats that fit in nearly everything an open pickup truck would take. The Sport will be manufactured entirely in India, with 4x2 and 4x4 variants, and priced close to the Fortuner.

The home truth is that Indian buyers trust Toyotas more than they trust their own families. And Mitsubishi, for all its competent products, is yet to really make an impact this side of the ocean. If it wants to turn that around, the Pajero Sport is its best bet.



## SIBLING RIVALRY



### MITSUBISHI PAJERO

Has a Dev Anand-type evergreen fan following, especially up north. Don't believe us? YouTube Miss Pooja's "*Wich Pajero de rakh li desj gun*". Fan following aside, the Pajero is a great off-roader that has stood the test of time, but Mitsubishi should retire this one. Priced in Sport territory, it'll just be in-house competition for HM.



### MITSUBISHI OUTLANDER

One of the best SUVs we've driven, it has the same underpinnings as the Lancer Evo X. The only drawback is it comes only with a thirsty petrol engine. And that sloppy CVT transmission. With a diesel engine and manual transmission, what an SUV this would've been. Sigh...



## OUT-OF-HOME RIVALRY



### FORD ENDEAVOUR

The first to start the 'affordable SUV' madness in India, the Endeavour began well but faded after a while following new competition, especially from Toyota.



### TOYOTA FORTUNER

The SUV that dethroned the Endeavour and has since been King of the Hill. Toyota is still firing on all cylinders to clear the Fortuner's hefty pending orders. The recent refresh will only make those waiting periods longer.



### CHEVROLET CAPTIVA

Not Chevy's biggest seller but the Captiva is doing decent numbers. The large part of this SUV's appeal is its styling and passable all-road manners. And like the others in this lot, it also has seats in the third row.