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Amby to continue marathon run with Euro-IV compliancy

Mumbai At a time when the country's largest car maker Maruti Suzuki has announced plans to phase out its over 25-year-old models – Maruti 800 and Omni from 11 cities in 2010, where the new emission norms come in first – the legendary Hindustan Motors' Ambassador shows no signs of calling it a day. The car, that has been in market since the 1949 way ahead of the Maruti 800 and Omni, is preparing for the new emission norms that set in next year. As per the new emission norms, only Euro IV compliant models can ply in the 11 cities including Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore, Chennai, Surat, Kanpur, Hyderabad, Pune, Agra and Ahmedabad. By 2015-16, the new emission norms will apply across all Indian cities.

Talking to FE, R Santhanam, managing director, Hindustan Motors, said, "In the next three to six months, our main focus will be to get the different variants of Ambassador qualify for the new emission norms that come in 2010. This is the major task ahead for the Ambassador." He added that among the three variants available, one (Grand) has qualified and others are yet to do so. "We will then take them to the Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) and certify them."



Currently, the car is available in three variants – Classic, Grand and Avigo. The company plans to phase out the third variant - Avigo. The car is priced in the range of Rs 3.5 lakh – 5.5 lakh (ex-showroom). Asked if the company is looking at getting a new engine on the car in wake of its preparation for new emission norms, a company spokesperson said, "It does not always mean to phase out the existing engine. Things can be done with some tweaking with the existing engine as well." The Ambassador has three engine types on it – the 1500cc, 1800cc and 2000 cc.

Interestingly, it was Maruti 800 that had shaken the market of Ambassadors and Premier Padminis and brought in the shift in the automobile market from bulky cars to small and swift cars. Said Mudit Gupta, project manager, Datamonitor India, “There was a time when bookings of Ambassadors used to run into a year long waiting, but in 1984 when Maruti 800 came, the Premier Padminis and Ambassadors started losing their market.” Further, the car has not seen any significant change in design since its launch and has been losing charm.

VG Ramakrishnan, director, automotive and transportation, Frost and Sullivan, South Asia and Middle East, said, “There has been hardly any significant change in the exterior of the car except for items like the headlamps, tail lamps, indicators and front grille, though it saw some important interior changes like the power-steering.”

He added that getting the Isuzu engine in-house in the 1900s and power-steering in the Ambassador were milestones in the car’s history.