

# INDIA'S AUTO EXPORTS FALL 5.5% IN FY24 AMID MONETARY CRISIS

Automobile exports from India declined 5.5 per cent in FY24 due to the monetary crisis in various overseas markets

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NEW DELHI

In the fiscal year 2024, automobile exports from India saw a 5.5% decline, attributed to monetary crises in several international markets, as per recent data released by industry association SIAM. Total exports amounted to 4,500,492 units, down from 4,761,299 units in FY23. SIAM President Vinod Aggarwal remarked on the challenges, noting ongoing volatility in



global markets.

"Some of the countries, where we are very strong with commercial vehicle and two-wheeler exports,

have been facing foreign exchange-related issues," he noted.

The last fiscal saw a sizeable drop in commercial

vehicle, two-wheeler and three-wheeler shipments, although passenger vehicles grew marginally.

However, in the January-March quarter this year, we have seen good recovery, especially for two-wheelers, indicating better potential for the rest of the year, he said. "We are very hopeful that going forward, the situation will improve," Aggarwal added. In the passenger vehicle segment, exports increased 1.4 per cent to 6,72,105 units in FY24 from

6,62,703 units in FY23.

Maruti Suzuki led the segment with the shipment of 2,80,712 units against 2,55,439 units in 2022-23.

Hyundai Motor India exported 1,63,155 units last fiscal. It had shipped 1,53,019 units in FY23. Kia Motors exported 52,105 units, while Volkswagen India shipped out 44,180 units last fiscal.

Nissan Motor India and Honda Cars chipped in with shipments of 42,989 and 37,589 units, respectively, in the 2023-24 fiscal.

# Godrej locks aims for 50% market share, focuses on affordable new products

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Locks and security solutions company Godrej Locks has said it aims to increase market share from 30 per cent to 50 per cent in three years, riding on a new range of affordable products and reduced prices of existing ones.

Shyam Motwani, business head for Godrej Locks and architectural and systems, said the company's newly-launched products are over 50 per cent af-

fordable than the existing locks, while efforts have been undertaken to make the existing locks cheaper by 7-8 per cent.

The company will rely on new affordable range and price cuts in the existing locks to achieve the objective of having the dominant market share in around three years, Motwani told.

The target is to grab 50 per cent market in the segment from the current 30 per cent, Motwani said, adding that the company sees a massive opportunity



for its products in the tier-2, 3, 4 cities and towns.

He further said the newly-launched locks have been

designed and developed in-house, keeping in mind the needs and aspirations of "rurban" (rural-urban) population without compromising on the products' effectiveness.

Founded in 1897, the company which has become a household name for its reliable products is looking at deepening its distribution in smaller cities.

Motwani said the "rurban" areas account for just over a fifth of the company's revenues at present, while the larger chunk

comes from top eight cities of India.

The company's reach is limited to over 340 towns in tier-2, 3 and 4 cities, and plans are afoot to double it to over 700 towns or having a presence in every district, he said.

The company, a part of Godrej and Boyce, is profitable and has registered a turnover of Rs 1,200 crore in FY24, he said, adding that it has doubled in the last three years.

When asked about the capital expenditure need-

ed for expansion efforts, Motwani did not give any specific figure but said that investment efforts are a continuing aspect for the business.

Investments by the company, which has a manufacturing unit in Goa, are focused towards automation efforts as well as design of new models.

The 7-8 per cent cut in prices of existing products is being ensured by reworking the commissions paid to the distribution network and will be followed

up eventually with a cut in the maximum retail prices, he said.

To a query on whether margins will have to be compromised, he said that the volume growth which the company is targeting will make up for it.

The locks market, which is around Rs 6,700 crore opportunity, will increase to Rs 10,000 crore by 2027, Motwani said, adding that while the overall market grows at 14 per cent, the company is targeting for an over 20 per cent growth.

# Snap India names Saket Jha Saurabh head of content, partnerships

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Snap India has appointed Saket Jha Saurabh as director of content and partnerships. Saurabh previously served as director and head-media partnerships at Meta Platforms Inc., before which he was director and head of the social media giant's entertainment and music partnerships.

Saurabh, a graduate of The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, has also served as business head of digital at Bloomberg.

India is California-based Snap Inc.'s biggest market globally with 200 million-plus monthly active users. Saurabh's role at Snap will entail enabling platform growth and community expansion in India, according to a company announcement.

At Meta, Saurabh had led the company's relationship with TV networks, movie studios, music labels, sports teams, creator agencies, and platforms. He was also responsible for delivering outcomes across key strategic areas including video monetisation, long- and short-form content, and regional and language expansion.

Report in May last year, Saurabh had been let go from Meta as part of the company's final round of layoffs aimed at eliminating about 10,000 roles.

Content studios and streaming services have been increasingly partnering with popular short-video platforms to reach wider audiences across the country and create hype in the run-up to the release of



their shows and films. The loyal fan-follow-

ing of these platforms serves as a ready base of young, digitally savvy audience, and creators who are often seen collaborating with lead stars pitch in with innovative concepts for short clips that grab viewer attention instantly.

These partnerships can extend from songs to dialogue launches, helping boost reach in tier-two and tier-three towns in particular.

Several film studios and marketing professionals emphasize that it's time to align campaign strategies with evolving audience tastes, go slow on traditional-media interactions and

public appearances, and leverage social media not just for advertising, but also to be part of the film or create content around it.

# Tech Recap: Meta AI Integrates with WhatsApp and Instagram, ChatGPT upgraded

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In this week's tech roundup, significant developments have been witnessed across various fronts. OpenAI has rolled out a crucial upgrade for ChatGPT, while Meta is testing its AI chatbot on WhatsApp and Instagram. Additionally, Google Gemini AI is set to debut on Oppo and OnePlus devices. Let's delve into the noteworthy tech advancements dominating headlines this week.

Mark Zuckerberg's Meta is now testing its generative AI chatbot, called 'Meta AI', on Instagram. Similar to other chatbots in the market, Meta AI will be able to craft poetry, generate images and answer other questions based on a single text prompt. Notably, Meta had also recently started testing its AI chatbot for certain users in India and other countries.

While confirming the development in a statement to Engadget, Meta said, "Our generative AI-powered experiences are under development in various phases, and we're testing a range of



them publicly in a limited capacity."

Chinese smartphone makers Oppo and OnePlus announced on Friday that their devices will soon be integrated with Google's Gemini AI models. Notably, the two companies said in an earlier statement that their smartphone will come with Gemini Ultra 1.0 integration, but later issued a clarification stating that Oppo and OnePlus devices will get "Gemini models".

In a joint release, Oppo and OnePlus said they are working with Google to integrate cloud AI into their upcoming products, meaning users will be able to use AI for tasks like summarising news articles, generating audio and generating social media content. Without going into further

detail, the companies also said they are working with a number of partners to bring "groundbreaking AI experiences" to their users.

Apple is finally making it easier to repair your iPhones by allowing customers and third-party service providers to utilise used Apple parts in repairs. The Cupertino-based tech giant says the new process will help maintain user privacy, security and safety, while offering customers more options and increasing product longevity.

Notably, Apple users were previously unable to repair their iPhones with used parts due to a process called 'parts pairing', which matches the serial number of the device to the new part sold by Apple. So if an iPhone user

replaced their display or camera with a used part, they would receive a notification saying that Apple couldn't verify the newly installed part and the new hardware could cause Face ID and Touch ID to stop working.

Google is bringing a host of AI-powered features to its Photos app from May 15. Google is also rolling out its AI-powered Magic Editor to all eligible devices. The powerful tool was one of the key selling points when the Pixel 8 series was launched last year, but it seems Google wants to get users accustomed to its own tool amid a rush of AI-powered image editors on the market.

However, Google does mention that free users will only be limited to 10 edits per month and that more edits will require a Google One subscription with 2TB of storage or more. However, Pixel users will still be able to make unlimited image edits.

Microsoft Founder Bill Gates hosted OpenAI CEO Sam Altman on his podcast where the duo had a wide-ranging discussion on

artificial intelligence. During the discussion, Gates also shared his scepticism about artificial intelligence taking away his job. He said, "I get a lot of excitement that, hey, I'm good at working on malaria, and malaria eradication, and getting smart people and applying resources to that. When the machine says to me, 'Bill, go play pickleball, I've got malaria eradication. You're just a slow thinker,' then it is a philosophically confusing thing." OpenAI has released a new update to ChatGPT, which is touted to make the generative AI chatbot more direct, less verbose and use more conversational language. Notably, the new upgrade is only available to paid users of ChatGPT, including those with ChatGPT Plus, Team, Enterprise or API subscriptions.

Informing about the latest upgrade in a post on X (formerly Twitter), OpenAI wrote: "Our new GPT-4 Turbo is now available to paid ChatGPT users. We've improved capabilities in writing, math, logical reasoning, and coding."

# How Robots are Changing the Hospitality industry



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The hospitality sector in India is experiencing remark-

able growth, poised to hit a market size of USD 120.4 billion in 2024. To stay ahead, hotels and restaurants are increasingly turning to automation, integrating autonomous robots into their operations. These robots are reshaping the guest experience and streamlining tasks throughout the industry.

Gone are the days of long queues at hotel reception desks. Now, autonomous robots handle check-in procedures, allowing staff to focus on personalised service. Studies have

shown that a significant number of guests appreciate the efficiency and convenience of this automated process. Additionally, some restaurants are experimenting with AI-powered chatbots, offering round-the-clock assistance to diners, from recommending local dishes to facilitating basic food orders.

The dining experience itself is transforming with the introduction of autonomous robotic waiters. These efficient servers navigate dining spaces, delivering dishes directly

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to tables. Imagine a sleek robot smoothly manoeuvring through the restaurant, gracefully avoiding

obstacles to serve up your favourite dishes. There's an ongoing exploration into robotic chefs, promising precise and speedy preparation of specific dishes, which could potentially revolutionise fast-food service. These robo chefs are still in their early stages, but they hold the promise of consistent quality and efficiency in kitchens with high turnover.

Hospitality is a sector where guests greatly value the warmth and personal touch that human interaction provides. For this

reason, it is important to integrate robotics in a manner that adds to the holistic experience, while taking full advantage of their benefits. By automating the tasks that robots excel at, human staff are free to concentrate on guest satisfaction. Hotels can leverage robots for repetitive duties like housekeeping or luggage delivery, allowing employees to focus on creating unforgettable experiences. Similarly, in restaurants, robotic waiters can handle basic deliveries, allowing servers to provide diners

with personalised attention and recommendations.

By strategically incorporating autonomous robots, the hospitality industry can elevate the guest experience in several ways. First, automation improves efficiency and reduces wait times. Guests checking-in or ordering food will experience quicker and more efficient processes, freeing them to explore the hotel or enjoy their dining experience sooner. Second, robots ensure consistent quality when it comes to

repetitive tasks. For example, a robotic housekeeper can maintain a high standard of cleanliness in every room. Finally, robots free up human staff to focus on what they do best: providing exceptional service and creating a welcoming atmosphere. This human touch remains paramount, and robots are unlikely to replace it. Instead, robots serve as valuable tools that can enhance the overall guest experience when used strategically.

Author is the founder of Alphasoid