

# Indian Hands Turning Wheels of Global Auto Cos

Thousands of engineers in the country are contributing to developing critical solutions for the future of automobile technology

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**Mumbai:** "There is an Indian hand in every Mercedes-Benz running around the world," said Ola Källenius, the global research & development head of the largest luxury car maker.

That acknowledgement is true not only for the German company but other leading car manufacturers investing in the future of automobile technology.

The Indian R&D setup for Mercedes-Benz has metamorphosed from a tiny division with 20 staffers in Bengaluru, the IT capital of India, a couple of decades ago into a powerhouse of 5,000 engineers that is contributing significantly to new-age technology. The compa-

ny is already preparing to double its office space as the scope of work expands significantly.

The Indian hand's presence is being felt in a world that is being disrupted by CASE - connected, autonomous, shared mobility and

electric. The Indian base is already churning out software codes for Mercedes-Benz's autonomous and connected cars for the future.

While it will take years before autonomous, connected and electric cars hit the road in India,

thousands of engineers based in the country are contributing to developing these critical solutions for the future. The focus on future automobile technologies has drawn other manufacturers to India, too, lured by the quality of

talent available in the country and affordability.

Ford Motor Company has set up a smart mobility solution division, which partners with civic authorities to try to devise a smart transportation solution that can be adapted in other parts of the world.

**MERC ENGINEERS IN** India working on disruptions of connected, autonomous, electric and shared mobility solution for HQ

**IT HAS GIVEN INDIA,** its second-largest R&D base, responsibility to drive digital solutions for future

**BOSCH HAS SET UP A 'AGILE PROJECT HOUSE'** to develop electric vehicles for India and a separate division for connected mobility solutions

**FORD HAS** already started partnering civic bodies in India to develop Smart City Solutions


**GM INDIA IS** working on vehicle connectivity & infotainment solution for global operations from the country



Illustration: ANIRBAN BORA

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## Long-term 3rd-party Motor Cover Must

 Beginning September, you will have to compulsorily buy long-term third-party motor insurance cover of 3 years for four-wheelers and of 5 years for two-wheelers, according to an SC ruling. >> 10

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Bosch, the world's largest auto component maker, has its biggest R&D centre in India. For the German company, India plays a critical role in not only devising cost-effective solutions for emerging markets, but also contributing towards big data and internet of things. Such is the depth of talent in India that connected and autonomous technology are the two main areas where the country already plays a key role, Källenius told ET.

He said India today does work on everything from powertrains, interiors, body, autonomous driving and connected vehicles.

"The engineers here often say that there is nothing an engineer in India can't do compared to one in Germany," Källenius said. "It's a good place to be digital. The strengths of India is digital knowhow, digital mindset and digital engineering. But it is not limited to one area."

Notably, the Indian operation has taken upon itself the task of moving the testing of Mercedes-Benz vehicles off the road and on to the digital landscape. The move to simulated vehicle testing could help the company save millions of dollars, considering that Mercedes-Benz has 17 families of products and dozens of variants.

Bosch is developing electric vehicle solutions for India and has carved out a separate division for connected mobility solutions. The connected services team is dovetailing with other divisions in Bosch such as the smart city solutions team to create holistic solutions that can

spearhead India's mobility vision, said Jan-Oliver Roehrl, Bosch's chief technology officer. Mobility in India is increasingly getting influenced by artificial intelligence and most products in the near future will be linked to AI solutions inside vehicles, Roehrl said.

"Such vehicles will either possess intelligence themselves or AI will play a key role in their development and manufacture. Bosch India also has expertise and knowledge about the Indian driving patterns, traffic conditions and the state of roads, so it is able to adapt mobility solutions accordingly. Local engine-

## FORD PLANS

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ering talent is partnering with global OEMs to make this a reality," he said.

For years, Bosch has used India as a test bed for solutions to be adapted in other emerging markets. Likewise, the R&D team of Renault Nissan Technology Business Centre India is helping the Chinese R&D team in developing a small electric car.

Ford India said in 2016 it would

invest \$195 million to set up a global technology and business centre in Chennai to leverage India as an innovation hub. Apart from serving the domestic market through a new product development centre, it will act as a smart mobility lab for global operations.

"Adding to the existing strength of 800-1,000 engineers in product development, the new campus will employ engineers, scientists and skilled workers to work on current as well as future technologies," a Ford India spokesperson said.

The smart mobility lab is expected to study various mobility solutions locally for global operations.

For General Motors, Bengaluru has remained a critical hub for product development for years. The General Motors Technical Centre India consists of a design studio and engineering centre with a workforce of over 2,000 engineers. While the company may have stopped selling cars in the country, the Indian operation delivers end-to-end projects including critical areas of work such as vehicle integration, infotainment systems and powertrains. The Bengaluru team is incorporating advanced technology and innovation for GM's future products, whether it is vehicle connectivity, infotainment, or powertrains, said Brian McMurray, VP - engineering and operations at GMTCI.

"It is definitely an exciting time for the up-and-coming engineers to be involved in GMTCI and be a part of the next wave of global auto change," he said, adding that he could not delve into further details at this time.