

Saab to enter Chinese market after two-year break

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN - Saab cars will roll off the production line in Sweden two years after the former General Motors subsidiary filed for bankruptcy.



Saab's are back in production for the Chinese market. Image: Wiki Images

"The first cars will leave the production line Monday (2 December)," Mikael Oestlund, a spokesman for the company's new owner, National Electric Vehicle Sweden (NEVS), told AFP.

At the time of its bankruptcy in December 2011, Saab was working on a new version of its 9-3 sedan but was forced to stop because it had run out of money.

Chinese-owned NEVS - which bought Saab out of bankruptcy in August 2012 - will pick up production of the petrol-driven sedan where the ill-fated company left off.

"It's very similar, you can't change or develop very much in a year. We bought the assets in August last year," said Oestlund. "Our focus has been to get the co-operation up and running with 400 suppliers and ensure the facilities were working."

Electrical version coming soon

The company aims to launch an electric version of the sedan in 2014, primarily aimed at the Chinese market.

"We are going to produce the chassis here in Trollhaetten (western Sweden) and mount the batteries in China," said Oestlund.

Saab teetered on the edge of collapse for nearly two years and was briefly owned by the Dutch car firm Spyker, which became embroiled in a legal battle with Saab's former owner General Motors (GM).

A last-ditch bid to raise funds in China, with the Youngman group, was blocked by GM over issues concerning the transfer of technology. Saab then ended up bankrupt.

NEVS plans to adapt Saab's Phoenix production platform - replacing 20% of the parts originally sourced from GM - and to make it a suitable platform for fully electric vehicles.

Oestlund said that the initial production figures would be modest but he declined to say how many would be made.

"We don't want to make promises or forecasts we don't know we can fulfil. We are humble and the production volumes will initially be low and may increase over time depending on market demand," he added.

National Electric Vehicle Sweden (NEVS) is 78% owned by Hong Kong-based National Modern Energy Holdings, a clean energy company. The Chinese city of Qingdao has a 22% stake.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge



Quality finish for the interior of a Saab convertible. Image: Wiki Images

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