

Nano is the talk of the town

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'I didn't have any plan to buy a car for some time now, simply because I was not too sure whether I could afford one. But now, I am sure I can. The Nano has suddenly made me realise that my dream of owning a car is within reach,' said Harish Sharma, who works in a public relations firm in Hyderabad.

'In fact, after the car was unveiled Thursday, a number of my friends and colleagues who do not own a car have now started thinking of buying one. This is what I call a dream car!' Sharma added.

The Nano, which will cost \$2,500 or Rs.100,000, at the factory gate, was launched by the \$29-billion Tata group, the country's largest business house Thursday.

Ratan Tata, the chairman of the company, while launching the car said: 'It's a safe, affordable and all-weather transport - a people's car, designed to meet safety standards and emissions laws and accessible to all'.

By saying this, he allayed fears of the Nano being environmentally unfriendly.

Everywhere in India, the reaction to the launch was: the common man on the road can 'now dream and actually own a car'.

Sukhbeer Singh, an auto-rickshaw driver in Delhi, said his vehicle cost him much more than the Nano.

'An auto cost from Rs.300,000 to Rs.400,000 while the Nano comes for a convenient Rs.100,000 only,' Singh said while comparing his auto and the new car.

'That's why a couple of us are thinking, why not buy a Nano instead of an auto-rickshaw? It's economical and commuters would any day love being driven in a car than in a three-wheeler,' he said, as his fellow auto-rickshaw drivers nodded in unison.

For the girls, the car is a real boon.

'I was pestering my dad for a two wheeler for the past four months. Travelling on public transport can get on your nerves. And then of course, there is no dearth of the eve-teasers who lurk around. Having your own transport saves the headache and makes you feel independent,' said Sagarika Sharma of Guwahati.

'A two-wheeler though was not something my father favoured, saying it was not safe in the maddening traffic...but now with the Nano, things look brighter. It's affordable, it's a car, hence safe, and it's so cute to look at! I can't wait to own one.'

Similarly, Shaina, a resident of Bangalore, said she could hardly wait to lay her hands on a Nano.

'It's so convenient and the best part is that it's affordable. It truly defines the phrase 'small is beautiful!'' she said.

Abhinav Nanda of Delhi said that he would rather go for Nano than for a two-wheeler.

'The Nano, since it's a car, is more safe to drive than a two-wheeler. It fulfils the aspirations of the lower middle class,' he said.

Some people have, however, expressed their apprehension over the car.

'Since it's so affordable, more and more people are going to buy it. India is adding millions of cars to its roads each year. With this, the number will shoot up...can you then imagine the chaos on the roads?' said Arpita Sen, who works for an NGO in the capital.

- *Indo Asian News Service*