

# Mahindra group MD calls for level playing field for EVs

Anish Shah wants overseas brands to come and make in India

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Even as the government is set to take a decision on Tesla's demand for an import duty cut on electric vehicles, Anish Shah, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Mahindra Group, is of the view that foreign players should manufacture in India and compete on a level playing field.

"There has to be a level playing field for everyone, and as you look at duties within India, they have been higher for cars for good reason. So, when we look at imports coming in, the question is, how does it stack up to the import duty structure of India, and when we think of any exports we make around the world, we think about what are the duties they charge for that to producers. So, all of those factors need to be looked at before we make the decision," Shah told *BusinessLine* in an exclusive inter-

view. In July, Tesla's founder Elon Musk had urged India to lower import duties on electric vehicles ahead of the iconic brand's launch in the country. The issue has divided the auto industry with multinational brands, including Audi and Mercedes, backing the demand for an import duty cut while Indian players, including Tata Motors and Maruti Suzuki, have been opposing any reduction.

Shah said that in the context of the Government's Make in India vision, "we would encourage brands to come in India and set up manufacturing capabilities".

## 'Make cars in India'

"We have not shied away from foreign competition. In fact, that is something that helps the industry, helps us grow, helps us learn more. But it is good for the government to focus on Make in India. Why would we want to buy vehicles made in China or any other country? We have the capabilities; we can design world-class cars now. If you look at XUV700 (Mahindra's latest SUV) and put that against any car in this segment globally, it will stand



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extremely well against all of those. Therefore, let us welcome the foreign competition but let us have them make cars in India, let us make our industry better that way, and let us compete with that," Shah said.

Mahindra & Mahindra is targeting 20 per cent of its total utility vehicle volumes to come from EVs by 2027. "Our sense is that it will start exponentially peaking up from there and will go higher as we go forward. So, there is a plan to move a number of our models into the EV space and thereby continue our market

leadership in our core SUV, as we go to electric vehicles," Shah said.

## Charging infra

But Shah acknowledged that it will take some time for the EV infrastructure to develop fully. "Battery swapping for four-wheelers is going to be a very difficult task. We will have to look at fast charging as an option and look at infrastructure in a broader way. It will go slower up to a point, once it reaches the inflection point, it will proliferate rapidly. That said, even if you think of 20 per cent by 2027, that is not too far off, that is a pretty substantial number, and that will start giving the scale required to reach the inflection point soon after that," he said.

"The analogy that I will give is of a test match, where we have completed 5 or 10 overs. As it plays out, it will result in various winners and losers over time, but the potential differentiating factor for us is going to be the form factor, which is the authentic SUV. So, we are going to focus on our core; in many ways you can look at the EV as another power train," Shah added.