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Ford to Build Third Plant in China

Plant will open in 2012 and produce the Focus

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By . Agence France-Presse

Ford and its Chinese partner announced on Sept. 25 they will build a third plant in China. Ford will run the new \$490 million plant in southwestern Chongqing through Changan Ford Mazda, its joint venture with Chongqing Changan Automobile Co and Japan's Mazda Motor Corp, the company said.

The plant, due to open in 2012, will produce Ford's Focus compact car with an initial capacity for 150,000 vehicles a year.

The one-million-square-meter facility will boost Ford's and Mazda's combined annual production capacity to 600,000 vehicles from 447,000 in China -- where it is lagging behind U.S. rival and local market leader General Motors, Ford said.

GM's partnerships and joint ventures give it a total capacity of 1.29 million vehicles a year, including low-cost micro vans.

Ford ranks number 12 in terms of sales in China, according to analysts J.D. Power and Associates, lagging far behind GM, Volkswagen AG, Hyundai Motor Company and Toyota Motor Company -- China's top four automakers by sales.

Ford sold 197,212 vehicles in the first half of the year, up 14% from a year earlier but the growth was dwarfed by GM, which shipped 814,442 units in the same period, up 38% year on year.

China's total vehicle sales, helped by Beijing's efforts to stimulate domestic consumption, outstripped those of the U.S. for the first time in January -- making the Asian giant the world's largest car market.

Total vehicle sales in China for the first half of the year were 6.09 million units, up 17.7% year-on-year, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers.

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