

Car sales surge in China

BEIJING: Passenger vehicle sales in China rose at an annual rate of 45.4% during January 2013, latest statistics have revealed. Data from the China Passenger Car Association show a total of 1,704,185 cars, sport utility vehicles, multi-purpose vehicles and minivans were delivered in the nation during the first month of the year. Rao Da, secretary-general of the association, told China Daily that there were specific reasons surrounding the impressive figures. "Such high growth was a result of five more working days in January and more than ten days of a slack market in January last year due to an early Spring Festival," he said. He also pointed out that, because of the later Spring Festival this year, February would likely see a 35% month-on-month fall in sales growth. But, taking the two months together, he expected to see a 25% year on year increase from the equivalent period in 2012. The leading foreign manufacturers all benefited from higher sales, with Ford seeing the greatest year-on-year increase. It reported a 135% rise in numbers sold, to 44,439. General Motors and its joint ventures reported a 26% year on year increase in January, selling more than 300,000 vehicles. Even Toyota, Honda and Nissan, whose sales had previously been hit by a consumer boycott following a political dispute between Japan and China, all saw their sales rise around 20%. Away from the mass car sector, luxury carmakers are also optimistic about the Chinese market. Bentley, the UK brand, saw sales in China increase 23% during 2012, and expects the country to surpass the USA as the marque's largest market during 2013. Rolls-Royce, another UK maker, sells a quarter of its production to China and CEO Torsten Muller-Otvos told China Daily. "I would not be surprised to see China as our No 1 market this year." Bugatti, the top-end sports car maker, is planning to expand its dealership from the current two to 15. "Chinese always want the best, and this gives us a bright future," said Franco Utzeri, Bugatti's sales director.