

China auto sales hit record in January: Industry group

SHANGHAI: Auto sales in China, the world's largest car market, hit a record 2.03 million vehicles last month, driven by robust demand ahead of the Chinese Lunar New Year, an industry group said Thursday.

Auto sales tend to pick up before the holiday, which starts Sunday, as people spend their New Year bonuses.

"There was evident growth of demand in the passenger vehicle market," the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers said in a statement.

Vehicle sales surged 46.4 per cent year-on-year in January to set a record for any month, the group said, but added the strong rise was also attributable to five fewer working days in January last year.

Sales of passenger vehicles alone jumped around 48.7 per cent from a year earlier to 1.73 million units, it said.

China's annual auto sales rose only 4.3 per cent year-on-year to 19.31 million units in 2012, hit by limits on numbers imposed by some cities to ease traffic congestion and cut pollution.

A dispute between Beijing and Tokyo also hurt sales of Japanese cars, but other foreign brands have fared better due to customers' perceptions of higher quality.

US auto giant General Motors said earlier this week that its January sales in China surged 26 per cent year on year to 310,765 vehicles, setting a company record for any month.

Its sales in China grew 11.3 per cent in 2012 from 2011 to a record 2.84 million vehicles, despite the country's slower economic growth, the company has previously said. India Times