

International review

Multiple locations

Saab's factory at Trollhättanin, Sweden, is one of four locations selected by General Motors for the production of the next generation of compact cars. The decision means that production is certain to continue beyond 2010. The new compact cars will also be manufactured at Bochum in Germany, Gliwice in Poland and Ellesmere Port in Britain. General Motors' Antwerp plant will not be involved in the production of the new Astra models, but it will build cars for other GM brands.

The US company, which is struggling to cut costs in its home market, makes Opel, Saab and Vauxhall cars in Europe. It is planning to invest 3.1 billion euros (\$3.9 billion) in the new Astra. However, the company wants the production time for the new Astra model

to be cut from 24hr per car to 15hr.

GM, which employs 60,000 people in Europe, has shed more than 12,000 jobs as part of a restructuring programme introduced in 2005 to cut losses in its European operations. Last year, Opel recorded a net profit of \$227 million — its first in seven years. However, the parent company has been hit by a sharp downturn in US sales of its cars, after failing to predict a consumer swing to smaller fuel-saving models. As part of the cost-cutting measures, GM closed its Opel plant at Azambuja in Portugal, with the loss of some 1,100 jobs.

Wind turbine order

Danish Vestas Wind Systems AS reports that its Vestas Northern Europe facility will supply 24 of its V80 wind tur-

Volvo to invest in Russia

The world's number-two truck maker — Volvo — says that it will build a truck plant in Russia to meet increasing demand. The firm issued a statement saying that the investment would amount to 935 million Swedish crowns (\$137.8 million). The new assembly plant will have a capacity of 10,000 Volvo trucks and 5,000 Renault trucks per year. The facility will be located in Kaluga, some 200km from Moscow.

bines to the Zajaczkowo wind power project in the north-western part of Poland. With a total output of 48MW, they will make Zajaczkowo one of the largest wind farms in the country.

The order has been placed by the project company Zajaczkowo Windfarm Sp, formed by Mitsui and J-Power of Japan. The latter have developed wind power plants both in and outside Japan with total capacities of more than 178MW and 275MW respectively. The Polish order comprises supply and installation of the wind power plant, plus software and a long-term maintenance and service agreement. Delivery of the turbines will start in November, with commissioning scheduled for next year. No financial details have been released.

Vestas is a world-leading producer of high-tech wind power systems; it employs around 60 people.

Small-car investment

Peugeot plans to spend 100 million euros (\$135.5 million) to launch a new model that will be made at its Trnava plant in Slovakia by 2010. The new car will share a platform with the Peugeot-branded 207 small car, which is already made at Trnava, 50km from the capital Bratislava. According to recent reports, the new car is expected to be badged as a Citroen.

The plant's manager told a news conference that the factory will close for four weeks in August to allow modifications to the assembly line, and that the new model will only be made in Slovakia. The factory, where Peugeot made over 51,000 of its 207 models last year and where output is expected to rise to 180,000 this year, has an annual production capacity of 300,000 units. The group has already invested 700 million euros (\$950 million) in the site.

Input-shaft grinding machine

A strategic alliance between Sydney-based Bishop Steering Technology Ltd and Melbourne-based ANCA Pty Ltd has resulted in a new machine for grinding key features of hydraulic power-steering input shafts. The ISGX will be marketed and distributed world-wide by Bishop (Tel: 0061 2 9491 6000).

Pat Boland, managing director of ANCA (on the left in the picture), says: "The partnership between Bishop and ANCA was born from mutual recognition of the relative strengths of each company. The combination of ANCA's latest machine design, building and grinding innovations with Bishop's expertise in hydraulic power-steering valve design and manufacture, plus in-process gauging technology, presents a powerful solution to the market."

Bruce Grey, managing director of Bishop (on the right in the picture), says: "The strategic alliance of these two Australian industry icons has resulted in a superior input-shaft grinding-machine platform, which is perfectly suited to supply the increased market demand in the very competitive 'manufacturing cost down with increased quality' environment."

The ISGX will be available in different configurations for grinding one or all of the key features on the input shafts, namely outside diameter, metering slot and metering-slot edge. In the case of the ISGX 1-in-1 configuration, which includes Bishop's proven Feather Edge Grinding technology, metering-slot edges can be ground to micron accuracy in around 25sec.

