

Geneva show launches remain in focus, for now

Carmakers gathering in Geneva are scrambling to boost their presence in booming emerging regions, as they showcase the new models they hope will boost their share of Europe's flat market at the auto show

European car sales are expected to remain roughly stable in 2011 now that the scrapping incentive schemes that propped up demand have finished, while sales in markets like Asia, Latin America and Russia will keep growing. Carmakers are pinning their hopes on cracking these markets, signing partnerships with local players, designing new models with those regions in mind, and increasingly, presenting new cars to the public in these regions.

But 'the Geneva auto show lets us take stock of the European market', Societe Generale analyst Philippe Barrier said. "Unlike Frankfurt or Paris, it is more European, less 'local,'" he added, referring to the other two major events in Europe's auto industry calendar. Geneva, which is traditionally slanted towards higher-end models, plays host to a slew of mass-market launches too, as carmakers jockey for a bigger slice of Europe's stagnant demand.

Italy's Fiat has highlighted the fruits of its tie-up with Chrysler, when it presented a new Lancia line-up based on its US partner's models. Japan's Mitsubishi unveiled



A model poses in a new Alfa Romeo 4C concept car during the Geneva International Motor Show

a new small concept car dubbed Concept Global Small while Suzuki showed another concept car, the Swift-S. Volkswagen announced the return of the Golf convertible, and displayed a revamped Tiguan

SUV. French carmaker Renault, hoping it can put the industrial espionage scandal that has engulfed it since January behind it, concentrated on design at the auto show. Design head Laurens van den Ack-

er, and not Chief Executive Carlos Ghosn, addressed the media, as Renault presented two concept cars — a multi-purpose vehicle, as well as the Captur crossover, based on partner Nissan's Juke.



Apple Inc. CEO Steve Jobs introduces the iPad 2

iPad 2 tablet launched by Apple's Steve Jobs

Apple has launched the second generation of its iPad tablet computer at an event in San Francisco

The company said the machine featured a faster processor, improved graphics, and front and rear cameras. Apple leads the industry in sales of tablet devices, but is beginning to face competition from rivals such as HP and Samsung. The event was hosted by Apple Chief Executive Steve Jobs, who has been on medical leave since January.

It had been widely speculated that he would not appear owing to his ill health. Mr. Jobs was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2004. Speaking on stage, he said, "We have been working on this product for a while and I just didn't want to miss today." Up until September 2010, Apple iPads accounted for 95 percent of tablet computer sales, according to research firm Strategy Analytics. By the end of 2010, this figure had

fallen to 75 percent. The loss of share was down to the arrival of scores of new tablet devices, mainly based on Google's open-source Android system. Other platforms have also begun to appear, including Microsoft's Windows 7 and HP's WebOS. Ovum analyst Adam Leach predicted a two-horse race in the tablet market over the coming year.

"The platform dominance of Apple and Google will continue through 2011 and beyond," said Mr. Leach. "However, devices based on Google's platforms will only overtake those based on Apple's platform by 2015, when we forecast 36 percent and 35 percent market shares respectively," he added. Apple has billed the iPad 2 as slimmer, lighter and faster than its predecessor.

The new device features the company's latest dual core A5 processor, which, it is claimed, delivers twice the processing power of the original iPad.

Richest man in the world turns to art with Mexico City museum

The world's richest man Carlos Slim inaugurated a massive museum in Mexico City to house his eclectic collection of art ranging from pre-Hispanic pieces to sculptures by French masters

In a glitzy event hosted by TV personality Larry King, some 1,500 guests ranging from Mexico's president to Nobel Prize winning author Gabriel Garcia Marquez toured the asymmetrical building that will be opened to the public later this month. Located in the heart of one of the capital's poshest residential areas, the Soumaya museum — named after Slim's late wife — will host some 60,000 pieces in six exhibit rooms, making it one of the biggest in Latin America.

Slim, worth \$53.5 billion according to *Forbes* magazine, made his fortune in telecommunications and now controls retail stores, mining and oil drilling firms. He credits his wife Soumaya, who died in 1999, for giving him his interest in art. The museum will be home to one of the world's most important collections of Auguste Rodin's sculptures and also prominently displays works by Mexican muralists Rufino Tamayo and Diego Rivera.

Emilio Azcarraga, the head of Mexico's largest broadcaster Tel-

evisa, briefly attended the gathering even though the two tycoons are fiercely battling to enter each other's core markets. The fight heated up recently when Slim pulled advertising from Televisa over fees. Designed by Mexican architect Fernando Romero, Slim's son-in-law, the building is covered with of thousands of hexag-



View of the Museum Soumaya

onal aluminium panels that reflect sunlight. Slim plans to build a huge development anchored by the museum that will include offices, apartments and shops with a price tag of \$750 million for the first phase of construction.

Don't worry, be happy and live longer

Today's lesson: be happy, live longer. Now science seems to back the glass half-full approach

A review of more than 160 studies on the connection between a positive state of mind and overall health and longevity has found 'clear and compelling evidence' that happier people enjoy better health and longer lives. In fact, evidence linking an upbeat outlook and enjoyment of life to better health and longer life was stronger even than that linking obesity to reduced longevity, according to the review published in the journal *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*.

"I was almost shocked, and certainly surprised, to see the consistency of the data," said Ed Diener, the University of Illinois psychology professor emeritus, who led the review. While Diener said a few studies he reviewed found the opposite, the 'overwhelming majority ... support the conclusion that happiness is associated with health and longevity'. There is no direct proof that happiness boosts longevity in and of itself, though.

The review looked at eight different types of long-term studies and experimental trials of both human and animal populations. For example, 5,000 university students studied for more than 40 years provided evidence that the most pessimistic students tended to die younger. In the laboratory, positive moods were found to reduce stress-related hormones, increase immune function and help the heart recover following exertion.

Meet Kompai, your new robot friend

Kompai is a robot companion to humans who need one

Born in a workshop near Biarritz, France, Kompai is the fruit of a European Union project to explore how machines can help the elderly and disabled. The result is a blend of watchdog, care assistant, and everyday computer. Vincent Dupourqué, the President of Robosoft, the company behind the venture, explained the idea, "A robot is certainly one of the best answers, the best technological answer to help people who are housebound."

One of Robosoft's robotics engineer, Arnaud Lago, gave more details, "It's a mobile robotic platform which is able to move around an apartment automatically. It is equipped with a laser and distance sensors for navigation and security. There's a tablet PC with a tactile interface that allows it to interact with the person who'll be using it, two directional microphones in order to speak to it, and a camera to allow the person to speak to others."

Kompai should be able to go where you tell him, help with the shopping list and even play games. He also gives distant relatives the chance to see and hear their loved ones.