

CHINA'S NUMBER ONE!

Number one auto market, that is.

Sales of vehicles in China hit a record last month, underlining the country's rise in the market as carmakers in the US scramble to avoid bankruptcy.

Chinese people eager to leave behind the age of the bicycle bought 1.10 million vehicles in March, up some five per cent from the previous record of 1.06 million in March last year, data from the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers showed.

The number cemented China in its position as the world's largest car market, outstripping even the US.

And meanwhile, those crummy US automakers?

Ford Motor expects to grow faster than the overall China market this year, banking in part on policy support to lift sales of its new Fiesta small car rolled out last month.

Regardless of its miseries back home, General Motors said it sold 137,004 vehicles in China in March, up 24.6 percent from a year earlier. Its minivehicle joint venture, SAIC-GM-Wuling, saw sales surge 38 percent to 90,784 vehicles. Kevin Wale, president and managing director of the GM China Group, attributed the strong showing to a wide product lineup, and forecast that the company will double its sales, to more than 2 million a year, by 2014.

We'll see whether the predictions actually bear out. Chinese "policy support" has a way of waxing and waning, IMO.

The GM minivehicle, btw, is a Chevy Spark, with

which GM is doing fairly well in developing countries.