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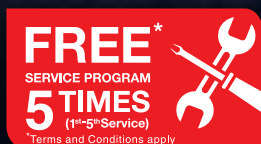


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## Steeped in History

**W**hen we look at the transport market today, we have to also see the evolution it has gone through. Without evaluating the history, neither the present, nor the future has enough context to understand them. Today is a snapshot of all the things that have happened and will happen. It has been very exciting times thus far in the year: I have been able to witness more history in the making.

In Johor, I was witness to the transformation of a business, a dealership that has been upgraded. A new chapter was opened for a transporter now focusing on ESG, using the latest technology in trucking to reach their goals. Other workshops in the Klang valley were officiated, trucks being handed over to growing businesses. At the same time, the end of production of a truck marks a different type of milestone. All these individual events make up the history of transportation in Malaysia in the future.

For this issue, I dug into the past of several industry veterans. What I have learned is they all had to overcome obstacles and opposition in the pursuit of their ambitions. There are lessons to be learned;

the past experience of those who dared to try something new has surely shaped their outlook for the years to come. Some of the events that I have witnessed are nothing short of an entry into a book of records, for example a brand clinching the top spot in sales for 11 times. This too, will have to be remembered by generations of truckers to come.

I keep detailed records of the material we have published and who we have interviewed. This, I find extremely helpful when I prepare for interviews with people I have previously spoken to. In preparation for any interview, I would review what has been said before and what Asian Trucker has published so that I can refer to it. This way, I can relate to the new material, make references and even analyse where a brand is coming from and how the latest developments harken back to their earlier activities. It is for example coming to no surprise that one of our regularly featured brands is now using AI to enhance road safety. After all, they have been using high-tech for some time now, dabbling in all kinds of tools and technology available to them to grow their business.

Oftentimes I wonder: do other people also keep our magazines as library? Every issue that we publish will be shelved in my home. I do keep five copies of every magazine that we produce. As we submit them to the national library, I know they keep copies. However, that is just the Malaysian edition. Right now, I have almost 1 000 magazines in my shelf, including the Thai edition, our editions on special topics, the show directories of MCVE (and MIBTC) and then some. These old magazines also serve to show us how we, as a brand, have changed. Or haven't. One thing that has been a constant is the Spot UV on our logo, which we won't compromise on. The style has changed. As has the style, the look of modern trucks.

As I depend on co-creators of trucking history, I am very excited about the vast network of unique and interesting individuals we have here in Malaysia. You could say I have some history with many of them. When talking to them, I often find that there is more than meets the eye and there is a lot of deep thoughts. Hopefully, I manage to capture histories of individuals too as I encourage our readers to reach to share their stories with us.

Remember to drive safe

Stefan Pertz  
Editor, Asian Trucker





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# SCANIA



## Isuzu Delivers 100th Unit of Elf Truck to DAQ Logistics

Isuzu Malaysia Sdn Bhd (Isuzu) augured in the new year with a notable event by handing over the 100th unit of its ELF truck to DAQ Logistics Sdn Bhd (DAQ Logistics), a logistics business specializing in transportation and supply chain solutions based in Puchong, Selangor.

The truck, which was handed over in early February by Isuzu Dealer – Ultra Gallant Sdn. Bhd. (Klang) during the lunar new year, is a light-duty ELF NPR75UKH EURO 4 model with a GVW of 7,500 kg, powered by a 5,193cc engine and has a maximum torque of 419Nm @ 1,600rpm.

Commenting on this, Isuzu Commercial Vehicle Division Chief Operating Officer – Masashi Nuijima said, “Our heartiest congratulations to DAQ Logistics for officially owning 100 units of Isuzu commercial vehicles. This achievement is a truly significant milestone for DAQ Logistics and a solid demonstration of its business acumen and foresight.

At Isuzu, our focus has always been about emphasizing innovation of transport solutions for all goods and people, and creating value that enriches society. This is what motivates us to constantly offer our customers top quality, reliable and efficient trucks backed by strong aftermarket support to deliver the productivity our customers want. We sincerely thank DAQ Logistics for choosing and staying with Isuzu and we look forward to further nurture the solid partnership we have established together.”


DAQ Logistics provides national refrigerated transport and delivers to various locations including depots, offices, schools, hospitals, airports, restaurants, retail outlets and shopping malls. The company purchased its first Isuzu truck in 2016 and today, the 100 units of Isuzu trucks it owns comprised of various models from the wide offering ELF range.

Spokesperson from DAQ Logistics shared, “Our services and expertise include the transportation and cold supply chain management of temperature-sensitive goods. We handle everything from deliveries to warehousing

needs, driven by our motto to make logistics easy without compromising on quality service and pricing. These are key to achieving customer satisfaction and we are committed to making it easy for our customers to choose us as their logistics provider.

“Likewise, we are pleased to have found a trusted commercial vehicle partner in Isuzu. For any businesses in the logistics sector, we all know too well that cost efficiency and reliability are very important when it comes to our fleet. Isuzu’s wide range of ELF truck models not only meet our varied requirements for fulfilling customers’ demands, they are also great on fuel-efficiency, drivability and safety which we are fully satisfied with.

In addition, vehicle parts availability and after-sales support are additional factors that stood out for us. All these add up to helping reduce our operating costs and truck downtime, which definitely made it easy for us to keep choosing Isuzu as our preferred truck brand.”

The Isuzu ELF light-duty truck range is available in 17 variants, covering safety features such as airbag for driver, anti-lock braking system (ABS), anti-slip regulator (ASR) and electronic brake force distribution (EBD). 



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# JAC's Electric Trucks Cornerstone of FM Global Logistics' ESG Push

*FM formalises collaboration with three companies to advance strategic ESG initiatives*

**F**M Global Logistics Holdings Berhad (FM Group) today formalised three strategic collaborations including JAC Motors Malaysia Sdn Bhd (JAC Motors).

The partnerships between FM Group's wholly-owned subsidiary, FM Global Logistics Sdn Bhd (FM), with the three companies serve to deepen FM Group's commitment to its environmental, social and governance (ESG) agenda. FM is also commissioning Solarvest for the installation of solar systems for FM warehouses at a cost of approximately RM1.5 million and acquiring two JAC i75 electric trucks from JAC Motors for RM557 000.

FM Group held concurrent ceremonies for the handover of six Scania prime movers, the presentation of Letter of Award (LOA) to Solarvest, and signing of LOA with JAC Motors during the event.

Speaking at the event, FM Group Managing Director Chew Chong Keat said: "FM Group's partnership with Scania, Solarvest and JAC Motors has certainly elevated us on the path to meeting our greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets."

FM's acquisition of JAC Motors' electric trucks marks the start of the company's transition away from fossil-

fuel combustion engines to zero emission vehicles. Based on JAC Motors' assessment, each i75 light truck offers up to 6 MT of emission avoidance annually. JAC Motors Regional Manager of Asia-Pacific Marketing Jason Jia said at the signing ceremony that the current EV trucks employ the latest clean energy technologies and offer a range of 200–250 km, which is perfectly suited for urban logistics and last-mile delivery

Apart from boosting fuel efficiency and reducing GHG emissions, FM Group's fleet modernisation initiative is also poised to improve operational excellence and enhance long-term environmental responsibility.

Meanwhile, FM Group's collaboration with Solarvest comes in the wake of the successful commissioning of a similar project on a single warehouse the previous year. The latest undertaking involves the installation of solar PV systems for an additional 1.0 megawatt peak (MWp) at FM Group's second and third warehouses, bringing the total installed capacity to almost 1.6 MWp from all three facilities. According to Solarvest, the solar systems on the three warehouses can generate almost 2 000 megawatts hour (MWh) of clean energy annually, potentially offsetting approximately 1 300 MT of GHG

emissions. Speaking at the presentation of the Letter of Award, Solarvest Group Vice President Jack Tan said: "This initiative underscores our shared vision of sustainability and commitment to advancing clean energy solutions in the logistics sector."

On FM Group's collaboration with Solarvest, Chew said: "The solar systems achieve two important objectives. The first is to reduce FM Group's reliance on electricity from the national grid. The second and more important objective is to contribute to reducing GHG emissions from purchased electricity." "From Malaysia, we will extend our ESG efforts to our regional offices. We intend to progressively reduce our carbon footprint by promoting sustainable practices, increasing energy efficiency and incorporating renewable energy sources," he added. **T**







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# Sunmax Petroleum Expands Fleet With UD Quester



*UD Trucks and TCIE handed over eight units of heavy-duty Quester to new customer in fuel transportation, Sunmax Petroleum Sdn Bhd*



**U**D Trucks and sole distributor partner Tan Chong Industrial Equipment Sdn Bhd (TCIE) recently delivered eight brand new units of UD Quester heavy-duty trucks to their new customer, Sunmax Petroleum Sdn Bhd (Sunmax), at a vehicle handover event held recently at the headquarters of Sunmax in Lukut, Negeri Sembilan.

Steve Hedouin, Managing Director Hub Malaysia, UD Trucks said, "UD Trucks is truly honored that Sunmax had chosen the heavy-duty Quester models to support its growing business. The Quester range was developed and continuously innovated to be a reputed range of trucks representing smart logistics the world needs to achieve greater efficiency in a constantly growing and changing market.

"Well-known for its established performance and durability, the Quester truck range delivers improved fuel and cost efficiency, productivity, safety and uptime to help customers manage their operational challenges a lot more effectively, thus optimizing business bottom line.

"Just as the Quester highlights UD Trucks' unwavering commitment in going the extra mile for our customers' business, we believe that this investment in Quester which Sunmax has made will markedly bolster their business productivity and serve their customers with quality service throughout," he said.

The eight new trucks comprised four Quester CWE model, and two each of Quester GWE and GKE models which will be used for transportation of diesel and fuel within Peninsular Malaysia. The Quester CWE and GWE models are 6x4 axle configuration trucks with a horsepower range of 330 to 440, whilst the Quester GKE model is a 4x2 axle configuration truck with a 390 horsepower. All the trucks are fitted with 11-litre GH11E engine that was engineered for substantial torque output and efficient fuel consumption through low engine speed operation. The vehicles come with 9 and 12-speed gearbox and full air brake system plus auxiliary engine brake system.





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Siow Wee Chuan, Managing Director, Sunmax Petroleum Sdn Bhd shared during the handover, "We are excited about the addition of Quester trucks to our existing fleet as this marks the beginning of our journey with UD Trucks. Being in the fuel supply and transportation business, the decision to go with the heavy-duty Quester was determined mainly by factors including efficiency, performance, dependability and safety. This came about after a series of comparisons and assessments made by our internal team.


"We are optimistic about our future growth and with the delivery of the vehicles now completed, we truly look forward to having the new Quester trucks hit the ground running with maximum efficiency and productivity. We anticipate that these new trucks will be able to help us achieve our operational goals by reducing fuel consumption and cost, deliver better quality service to our clients through greater uptime and strengthen our business bottom line."

Incorporated in 2019, Sunmax's business dealings involve the wholesale and transportation of petrol, diesel and lubricants, with a focus on the supply of fuel and diesel to bunker ships.

Loh Thim Choy, Senior General Manager, TCIE commented, "On behalf of TCIE, we would like to thank Sunmax as well as underline our commitment to providing the support they need as a new valued customer. Quester is not just a range of robust heavy-duty models, but also flexible and ideal for a variety of applications and industry segments. This truck is built to provide strong performance, great uptime, fuel-efficiency and safety, and we are highly confident that Sunmax will get to experience all the advantages that Quester can offer in time to come."



All the Quester trucks for Sunmax are fitted with UD Connected Services, a high-tech wireless communications fleet management system to help the company manage their fleet more effectively.

"UD Connected Services is a great tool that can help Sunmax maximize business profitability through efficient fleet management. It provides our customers with critical information such as fuel utilization which is essential in analyzing driver behavior, and track and trace for precise overview of fleet location. These features give our customers the means they need for effective planning and actions to be taken to improve fuel efficiency and reduce cost, increase vehicle uptime, and reduce unplanned stops and avoidable operational costs," added Loh. 





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# PK Logistick Maximises Profitability and Sustainability by Maximising Scania Total Solutions



Control Package that provides valuable insights and information about their fleet. They can be accessed via My Scania portal and Fleet app including essential features such as real-time positioning, vehicle performance monitoring, environmental reporting to track CO2 emissions, service planning, defect reporting, and driver evaluation.

**P**K Logistick (M) Sdn Bhd (PK Logistick) purchased and subscribed to a wide range of Scania Total Solutions during a ceremony to receive their new G420A6X2NZ Super Euro V. As part of the event, Jack Yoo, Managing Director of PK Logistick received the keys to the trucks from Joyce Antar, Managing Director of Scania Southeast Asia.

"Choosing the right transportation for our company is crucial to our success. Scania vehicles are highly reliable, and their services are exceptional. This is why we have decided to enhance our profitability & sustainability further by maximising the purchase and subscription of Scania's wide range of products and services," stated Jack Yoo.

PK Logistick signed a Scania Ecolution MOU to aim towards reducing emissions, subscribed to Repair and Maintenance Contracts, and acquired two additional units of Scania Super along with Scania Financial Services.

The Scania Super establishes a new benchmark in the industry with its remarkable torque at the lowest RPM. The 13-litre six-cylinder engine generates 2,800NM at 900RPM, leading to up to 8% fuel savings. Its 13-litre engine is supremely robust for more uptime, for increased operational life by 30 percent and for extended power range of up to 550hp. It also introduces industry leading engine brake thermal efficiency levels of 50 percent, which is unique in the heavy truck industry. The gearbox of the Scania Super offers a wider gear ratio spread for faster and smoother gear changes that gives more driver comfort and control while also introducing the most versatile and robust chassis yet for more tailor-made applications and operations. The new Side Curtain Airbags and Steering Wheel Airbag now comes standard with the Super in addition to Electronic Brake System (EBS) with Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS) and Traction Control (TC).

The fuel consumption can be further reduced by leveraging on a suite of Scania Digital Services, including a 5-Year Fleet Management System

"In addition to the Powertrain, driving performance significantly impacts fuel consumption. Scania Digital Services, such as Scania Driver app, soon-to-come ProDriver, Driver Training and Coaching, can further reduce fuel consumption and emissions. We continue to offer customers tools that enables them to further improve profitability and sustainability," stated Joyce Antar. Established in 2018, PK Logistick (M) Sdn Bhd offers comprehensive logistics services via sea, air, and land. The company specialises in loading and unloading, packing, warehousing, and other related operations. In 2021, they began a sustainable partnership with Scania, and currently operate a fleet of five Scania vehicles. 







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# WABCO

# Angka-Tan Motor Opens First Own Foton Service Centre



These are auspicious times; ushering the year of the Snake, Angka-Tan Motor (ATM) hosted customers and business partners for the opening of their first Foton 2S Service Centre. Celebrating this milestone on the 18th of February, the Angka-Tan Motor team was especially thrilled to celebrate this festive season with industry players gathered for the occasion.

Officiating the event, Mr Michael Chew, Head of Business, Angka-Tan Motor, said that "The official opening of Angka-Tan Motor's first-ever Foton 2S Service Centre marks a truly momentous occasion, not just for our company, but for our entire network of Foton owners and customers in Malaysia." Angka-Tan Motor has been the sole distributor of Foton Light Commercial Vehicles (LCVs) and the distributor for Foton Heavy Commercial Vehicles (HCVs) in Malaysia since 2011. This service centre further strengthens and enhances ATM's commitment to provide the best service to their customers and partners.

Strategically located in Puchong, Selangor, this new Foton 2S Service Centre is part of ongoing efforts to enhance Foton service capabilities and to bring better value to customers. Within the nationwide network, this is the 40th Foton Service Centre in Malaysia. While other workshops are appointed partners, this is the first ATM owned workshop. In Chew's words, this reflects their commitment to providing

accessible and quality after-sales service, no matter where their customers are located. What makes this workshop special is that the service centre will not only provide comprehensive maintenance and repair services from the after sales point of view, but this facility is also constructed to cover and conduct Pre-Delivery Inspections (PDI) for new vehicles before handing them over to customers. This is to ensure that every vehicle is in tip top and optimal condition. According to Chew, the location was chosen as there is a large Foton population present.

With a total built-up area of 1.65 acres, 0.47 acres are dedicated to the workshop; this service centre is

equipped with 14 service bays, a team of 30 staff will be accommodating over 20 vehicles intake per day to be serviced. The vehicles serviced are the Foton trucks as well as the JMC pick-ups. The latter has seen a good response from the market with several hundred units having entered service in businesses. "Whether it's routine maintenance or complex repairs, our highly skilled and experienced technicians are ready to deliver exceptional service, thanks to the latest diagnostic tools and specialized equipment available on-site," Chew told the guests gathered for the event.

In total, ATM have invested RM2.2 million into the facility. As a location, this has been identified as being strategically beneficial as it offers better accessibility customers. The capabilities of the workshop include the service of both ICE and EV trucks sold under the Foton brand. Although the workshop has just been inaugurated, Chew already foresees that there will be enhancements added shortly. One of the areas where ATM still sees a lot of potential to go above and beyond of what is now the expected level of service. For instance, drivers sending their vehicles for service could be taxed back to their office instead of having to wait at the workshop. "As we move forward, we are confident that this new service centre will be a vital part of our growing network, allowing us to continue to provide the outstanding after-sales support that our customers expect from us," Chew concluded.

During the event, high-achieving dealers were awarded for exceeding their sales targets in 2024; Celebrations went on for most of the day as ATM took the opportunity to also host their open house event on the same day.





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## Johortrucks Rebrands as Besuto Auto with FAW Line-up

**T**he long-anticipated re-opening of the FAW dealership took place on 15 March 2025. With a full house and an impressive line-up of trucks demonstrating their brawn, Besuto Auto (M) Sdn Bhd celebrated this milestone in their company history. The remodelling of the dealership took six months, during which the space grew from 5 000 to 200 000 square feet to host the operations where now some 30 staff work.

During the opening ceremony, management reiterated on their promises to the market: Besuto Auto will continue to offer vehicles to the new market. They not only sell products, but also solve the customer's urgent needs and create the future together. In the future, the development of Besuto Auto will focus on strengthening customer service, strengthening its team through training, and deepening the understanding of the products and services of customers.

Encouraging Besuto Auto, Dato' David, Chief Executive Officer of NBG Industries, who was present for the launch, said "Keep going Besuto Auto. The sky is the limit. Keep going!" NBG Industries is the distributor of FAW trucks in Malaysia. He explained that, FaW stands for First Automobile World. It is the first company in China to build automobiles and was formed in 1953. He pointed out that over the course of the seven decades of company history, improvement have been drastic. "Some 15 to 20 years ago, nobody wanted to know about China trucks. And now, China -made trucks are well accepted in Malaysia." Anticipating further growth in market share of Chinese trucks, he said that this is an opportunity for Besuto Auto. It is also an opportunity for FAW to contribute to Malaysia's economy, as FAW has contributed immensely to the development of China.


Fronting the operation is serial entrepreneur Ms Oyuni Yong, Executive Director, Besuto Auto. Having started her career with a Japanese passenger car brand, in 2008, she ventured into international shipping with her brother. In 2018, she formalised a partnership that led to the creation of Johortruck.com as the first brand name for the dealership. She told Asian Trucker that she is driven by her passion to improve the lives of truckers. "I always like listening to customer feedback and



always ask about the why and what they need. Trying to solve the issues they face, if their business is doing better with my help, I am so happy for that."

The decision to become a FAW dealer has been motivated by the long history and proven track record of the brand. Yong stated that FAW has been instrumental for the growth of China and therefore would be ideally suited for the Malaysian market, too. In addition, the confidence in the brand was buoyed by the many positive reviews and experiences that are shared on social media platforms.

What sets Besuto Auto apart is a new approach that Yong is nurturing. Conceptually, the new workshop and showroom is extending beyond the notion of it being a 3S or 4S centre. "This is a 5S centre, whereby it is sales, service, spare parts and survey and satisfaction, making this a single hub for everything required by our customers," she said. In particular, the survey component is of utmost importance to her as this is where the problem-solving nature of the business derives its strength. Rescue services and auxiliary offerings supplementing the truck sales round out the offering of Besuto Auto.

"We are ambitious. While we are now having a showroom in Johor only, we hope to expand into other states of Malaysia too," Yong said before heading back to the event proper, attending to customers curious about the vehicles park on parade. 



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## UD Celebrates 90 Years of History

The celebration was also marked by the official opening of Tan Chong Industrial Equipment's Newly-Updated Batu Caves 3S Center.

UD Trucks, a leading Japanese commercial vehicle solutions provider, together with sole distributor partner, Tan Chong Industrial Equipment Sdn Bhd (TCIE), recently hosted a Chinese New Year dinner event for customers, partners and dealers at TCIE's newly-upgraded Batu Caves 3S Center (sales, service and spare parts). The event was held to celebrate two key milestones - UD Trucks turning 90 years old this year and the official opening of this aforementioned 3S Center after a comprehensive renovation and enhancement work.

Around 200 guests comprising customers, dealers, senior management and staff of UD Trucks Malaysia and TCIE attended the event and were feted to a lou sang dinner, 90th anniversary cake-cutting, ribbon-cutting and lion dance to officiate the opening of the upgraded 3S Center, video presentation showcasing the enhanced facilities and a tour of the center. Also on display throughout the event were the latest Euro 5 Quester and Croner trucks.

Steve Hedouin, Managing Director of Hub Malaysia, UD Trucks shared, "This year marks 90 years of innovation in transport solutions for UD Trucks since it was founded in 1935 by Kenzo Adachi. The journey to this anniversary milestone has taken us from our humble beginning of developing our first diesel engine to our current focus on decarbonization and a commitment to making life better for people and the planet through innovations for smart

logistics. In Malaysia, we are honored that more than 45 years out of UD Trucks' 90-year existence today has been built with the support of a solid partner, TCIE.

"Ever since our partnership started in 1978, we have indeed achieved great strides together, especially in the recent decade through the offering of new innovations of our renowned heavy-duty Quester, medium-duty Croner and light-duty Kuzer trucks in this market. The opening of TCIE's upgraded Batu Caves 3S Center is one of many significant milestones that reflect our shared commitment in providing the best quality transport solutions and services to customers."

Hedouin further said that UD Trucks aims to continue to deliver transformative innovations and solutions for smart logistics to help their customers become more efficient and resilient in this rapidly changing industry landscape, and to contribute towards environmental sustainability.


Meanwhile, Loh Thim Choy, Senior General Manager, TCIE echoed in his speech at the event, "We are proud to celebrate the 90th anniversary of UD Trucks and to underline our commitment to continuously deliver exceptional products and services to our customers with this much-anticipated opening of our upgraded Batu Caves 3S Center. This center has gone through a thorough and major upgrading, and it truly demonstrates our strong dedication in enhancing customer experience and the efficiency of their business, as well as our own operations."

The Batu Caves 3S Center, which also serves as the location for TCIE's headquarters, now offers improved customer engagement experience, engineering and technical assistance for breakdown and maintenance, and a 24-hour breakdown service support.

Customers and drivers who visit the center will now be welcomed by four reception counters to reduce waiting time. In addition, a comfortable and cozy lounge area that serves light beverages provides a restful environment especially for drivers, while they wait for their vehicles to get inspected or serviced.

On the technical support front, this upgraded 3S Center also now boasts 28 service and repair bays compared to 14 bays previously. Traffic work flow is also more streamlined as 14 bays are dedicated for light commercial vehicles and the other 14 bays are for medium and heavy commercial vehicles. There is also a newly-built service pit for the technical team's easy access to the undercarriage, thus providing them with better work efficiency. Other amenities include dedicated rooms for engine overhaul, special tools and a full inventory of spare parts.

Loh further said, "We believe we will be able to foster closer ties with our valued customers by providing them with a more accessible and modern space for interaction, as well as expanded technical facilities to better support the operation of their fleet. Customers do not just need products, they also need a true partner for all-round support, from one who is always ready, reliable, and committed to provide the solutions for their challenges and help them achieve success. That's why TCIE is proud to stand by our promise of always being on call, on time, every time."

"Although we are pleased with the achievements for this Batu Caves 3S Center, the journey doesn't stop here as we plan to upgrade several other dealership centers. Also, we have plans to expand our dealership network and include new centers in Klang and other key locations to further strengthen our reach to customers. This year will definitely continue to keep us busy," he concluded. 





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# SV Prestige Opens Revamped Puchong Outlet

Isuzu customers in Puchong will now be able to enjoy a fresh retail experience following the opening of the new SV Prestige Isuzu 3S Centre today.


Located prominently along the busy Jalan Puchong near the IOI Mall, the new SV Prestige Isuzu 3S Centre features the latest Isuzu Corporate Identity (CI) while showcasing the all the latest offerings from Isuzu.

The new outlet was officially opened by CEO of Isuzu Malaysia Shunsuke Okazoe who commended the management of SV Prestige for their exemplary contribution towards building the Isuzu business in the Klang Valley.

"Despite the crowded marketplace in the Klang Valley, SV Prestige has been able to stand out as one of our key dealers in the region. In the urban area, strong customer care is required to be able to be successful. I believe that SV Prestige is fully committed to providing Isuzu customers with the highest level of customer care," said Mr Okazoe.

The SV Prestige Isuzu 3S Centre levels-up the retail experience by offering the latest array of hardware and software under one roof. The spacious showroom showcases the latest Isuzu models and includes a separate discussion room where prospects are able to conduct their business in private. The showroom also houses the latest Isuzu innovation where prospects can experience the Isuzu D-Max in VR or AR before they even step into the actual vehicle.

As an authorized Isuzu truck dealer, customers can expect top-notch after-sales care for any Isuzu vehicle including the large Giga trucks. The spacious service centre with four service bays available ensures that customers are able to enjoy a quick turn-around when they clock in for service.

The updated SV Prestige Isuzu 3S Centre is located at Jalan Bandar 17 Pusat Bandar Puchong with the showroom open daily. 



# Torn, Pulled in All Directions

**A**s the adage goes, failure to plan is planning to fail. To succeed, a business needs to be set upon a clear direction in terms of strategy, investments and also operational focus. Transport owners operate within the economic and legal framework that is prevailing at any given time. The more certainty there is, say in the form of policies, the better decisions can be made. There will always be unknown unknowns, the fact that you know that there will be risks and circumstances that cannot be anticipated, however, if these are kept to a minimum, industry players will have more confidence when forging plans for their business.

Recently, I felt that many industry players are taken aback and adopt a wait and see approach. What is happening is that there are many more unknown unknowns popping up. Suddenly, there are changes in legislation, policies and procedures that came unannounced, to the surprise of the parties affected. Take for instance the push to move to EURO V emission norms: for over a decade I hear that EURO IV would be implemented. Then, with a hoppla, we are now implementing EURO V. Similarly, there seems to be a lot of uncertainty about where the journey is headed when it comes to electrification of transportation.

Two recent events stand out. Lamented by associations and transporters, the ban of heavy goods vehicles on two more highways came from left field with no consultation of the associations (we were told). The implementation of these bans was also rather swift, taking effect soon after being announced, with little time for the industry to prepare. Shortly after, Port Klang announced new weight restrictions to be imposed. Again, the affected parties, hauliers, were not given a lot of time to prepare themselves for the new conditions set.

With the current system of licencing transportation, it is already tough to react to changes in demand swiftly. When planning ahead for business growth, asset acquisition needs to be planned carefully. Buying the wrong type of truck can be fatal for a business. Even with many factors being known, this is already a gargantuan task. These assets, the trucks, are directly linked to the bottom line. Obviously, it is extremely difficult to adjust the trucks or to invest in more or sell off some if they are no longer suitable for the jobs. When the competitive environment is drastically changed frequently and suddenly, the net result is that the industry will be paralysed. Who would want to make decisions, not knowing what will happen next?


Confidence stems from stability. Or the reduction of the unknown unknowns. When the government, authorities and industry bodies provide clear directions and directives with a long-term perspective, transporters



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can base their decisions on the assumption that these will be in place for a while. Any sudden change will also disrupt the industry, diverting attention to addressing a new set of parameters instead of being able to improve the service offering. Those companies that strive are usually the ones the are best fit to suit the environment. However, to make a business fit, it needs to adapt; constant changes require constant adaptation.

In the case of the transport industry, consumers are also affected. As was noticed during the implementation of the ban of trucks on highways, commuters praised the move, however quickly realised that this could also result in higher prices of goods. As any economy is an intricate system of interlinked participants, ripple effects can be severe. For example, truck drivers may now not earn enough and change jobs. Which in turn further exacerbates the driver shortage, which will likely be addressed by higher wages being offered. The net result is that goods could become more expensive when they finally get sold in the shops.

As Malaysia is also part of the global economy, it is subject to influences from around the world. There are a lot of unknown unknowns shovelled on top of what we have to deal with locally. Therefore, it should be paramount to reduce the uncertainty and ensure that the transport industry is governed by stable, predictable and manageable change. Change and adaption is needed, but it also needs to be communicated and planned in a manner that allows for long term planning. 

# Deep-dive Into Service Network Management

*Asian Trucker takes a closer look at what it takes to provide a proper and professional service network that keep the trucks on the road, competitive charges and everyone safe and the driver happy.*

A lot of the discussions revolving around trucks operators are not only on the purchase price but the following aftersales service and maintenance contracts, rescue services and predictive maintenance. These being hot topics, it is clear that the service network, the workshops operated by a franchised brand, is vital for the sustained success of any OEM brand. The success of the OEM/brands in supporting their customers operation is highly dependent on the way these workshops network operates. In this exclusive, Mr Tan Keng Meng, CEO of Warisan TC Holdings Bhd, offers insights into this topic. Considering that this discussion took place at C-Level is an indication as to just how important this subject is.

## Why Workshops?

First of all, one would have to ask why any brand would need workshops at all. The answer is: for Aftersales support. What is important to point out immediately is that not all workshops are the same. The proper workshop should be authorised and certified, as Tan points out. "Workshops are part of a large ecosystem. They allow for the duties of the aftersales team to be performed." Generally speaking, the scope of work divides into service, maintenance and repair. According to Tan, the task of the aftersales is to ensure that any truck would run in a safe and optimised manner, with an emphasis on the safety of the vehicle. The moment any vehicle is being put on the road, the need for service and maintenance arises, even if it is a brand-new truck.

A major difference between passenger cars and commercial vehicles is the usage: commercial vehicles clock in much higher mileage in shorter time than passenger cars as they are used to generate income. Angka-Tan Motor, as part of the Tan Chong Group, has more than 45 years of experience and an extensive service network. "This





is important for our customers using Foton trucks. With over 40 service points, we offer convenience to them,” he explained. For Commercial vehicles with the increased wear and tear as a result of high usage, they need workshops to ensure regular services to keep the vehicle uptime and in safe and functioning.

### **Certified Competence**

Trucks differ significantly in terms of technology used. On one hand that requires technicians to be highly trained on the vehicles of the brand they work on and on the other hand, it is maybe difficult for technicians familiar with one brand to work on another. Tan mentioned that this is why customers should insist on having trained, certified and qualified staff to work on their vehicles. The best way to ensure this that customers get the best service is by steering to the brand's own service network rather than any third-party workshops. The latter may not only lack the expertise, but also the special tools and diagnostic software to perform the work. Technical expertise means that technicians are able to accurately diagnose any issues and provide the required remedy for any problem.

Whenever a new truck model is introduced (in Malaysia), technicians will need to be trained on the processes of service, repair and maintenance of the vehicle. To do so, the manufacturers/brand owners will train and evaluate the staff on their competence; this is one of the prerequisites for a workshop to be certified. The knowledge and adherence to the prescribed processes will be audited on a regular basis with re-fresher course being administered should the need arise. In the case of authorised workshops, Angka-Tan Motor would train and audit these third-party service providers in accordance with the knowledge the principal has imparted.

In addition to the availability of specialized original tools and diagnostic equipment, and the process know-how that is important, but the availability of genuine spare parts. These are, as per Tan's elaboration, designed to run optimally as per OEM designed thereby ensuring safety, durability and reliability. A third party non genuine aftermarket parts may not be able to match the genuine parts. It may even affect the warranty terms.

Being genuine extends into the processes of how any vehicle is serviced, maintained or repaired, as stipulated by the manufacturer/brand owner. This is a compliance issue whereby the execution of any work in adherence to the original equipment manufacturer's specifications ensures that the warranty is kept intact, and the vehicle's components work in perfect harmony. “This is, why I don't believe

all workshops are created equally.” At the same time ATM workshops offer fleet owner the service of their Fleet Management Program. “We offer this service to allow customers to maximize their investment in their trucks.”

Within this ecosystem, the Foton Care, the TC Trust programme, is a comprehensive package to assist fleet owners to conduct their regular services. Tan urges fleet owners to adhere to the schedule as this will prevent any issues that could arise when service is lapsed. It is of utmost importance to have wear and tear parts replaced as soon as it is deemed necessary.

### **Procedures to Perfection**

At the heart of the operation are stringent standard operating procedures. Whenever a truck is being sent to the workshop, an initial, thorough inspection is conducted. A job card is being created, detailing the work steps that are to be carried out, parts to be replaced and issues to be fixed. “In this context, this is extremely important. All these valuable data that we collect, will be used in many different ways. One important aspect is to have the full history of the services so that any problem arising can be traced back to a potential problem in the past. Secondly, and maybe more importantly, the service record is available for every vehicle in all our workshops. This means that a truck can be serviced in any of our authorised workshops and the teams there have the full history of the truck at their fingertips.”

There are signs on how to identify a good workshop. Using proper diagnostic tools, the health of the vehicle is then assessed. Engaging with the customer, any issue will be discussed and the best way forward. Addressing the needs of each vehicle, the team plays a crucial role: not always are the diagnostic tools able to pinpoint a problem. This is where technical understanding comes into play and the experience of staff will allow for the best way forward to be plotted. Be it a regular service or a major repair, the technicians need to be equipped with the right expertise and backed-up by a support framework that allows them to consult with the client, offering the best solution. “Again, all the details will need to be added to the system. Imagine going to a doctor where all your records are on hand so that the doctor can make the best-informed decision.”



Stressing further the importance of having the right tools, Tan reiterated that every vehicle based on their design would have their own specific tools and systems to optimize and perform the work on the trucks. Not using specialized tools for the Foton trucks may delayed the service or repair and even cause damages. Having these tools is one part of the equation, while having people trained on the correct use is the other half.

### **A Good Technician**

Many industry players lament that finding motivated and qualified staff is difficult. Tan Chong Group looks for talent in technical schools while also maintaining their own training academy. It may help that Tan Chong Group has built a stellar reputation as a Malaysian brand of choice for consumers and employees alike. Meanwhile, the Tan Chong Group HR department is always on the lookout for talent. Some people may be more technically inclined, thus finding a calling in a commercial vehicle workshop.

Workshop staff or technician has an important role to communicate with the driver of the vehicle when assessing the status of the truck. Almost like an involuntary technician, the driver should be able to identify any issues arising with the truck. This way, the driver and technicians are buddied-up to form a team to ensure the best possible outcome from a visit to the workshop. Driving styles impact the condition of the truck and this is where driver training, and together with telematics can work wonders to reduce maintenance cost. Again, for this to happen, the driver has to be trained, to understand the optimized way of getting the best out of the vehicle, have the right attitude. It is also important that the vehicle owner is on the same alignment on training the driver and understanding the optimized benefits.

In this respect, it is the driver that should be the first harbinger of (bad) news. Drivers need to be attuned to the way the vehicle performs, its movements, noises and reactions. Noise is generally an indication that something is not right, and drivers need to be trained to detect, process and analyse such information.




### **A Proper Sending Off**

Once the vehicle has been serviced, there is a strict protocol regarding the final check before handing back the truck to the driver. This is to ensure that all points on the job card have been completed, completed correctly and in the prescribed manner. A short test drive will ascertain that there are no hidden issues that have been missed out. It is then recommended that the driver upon taking possession of the truck again also does a thorough inspection and a brief test drive.

In case a problem re-surfaces, it is the service record that is crucial to finding out what went wrong. There are essentially two possible root causes. First, the diagnostic has been wrong when assessing the vehicle. The other possible root cause is that the repair was not carried out correctly. In either case, retraining may have to be scheduled to prevent similar incidents from occurring. Admittedly, although the chance of something going wrong is small, however it is never zero. "Today's work environment is a very fluid one and there is always a possibility that something goes wrong. We are only human after all, and all diagnostic is also created by humans."

### **Strength in Numbers**

Many transporters operate nation-wide, if not across states. With a network of 18 workshops owned by and additional authorised workshops across the country, one is never far from a Angka-Tan Motor workshop where one can service a Foton. With a service and maintenance contract, the operator will have an assurance that the workshop staff is capable with the peace of mind when it comes to cost as the prices are stipulated in the contract.

Putting all this together into a philosophy, one will notice that the approach is to maximise the lifespan of the trucks as well as the spare parts. One may be curious as to why a service provider like Angka-Tan Motor would not have an interest in selling more, thus maximizing sales and profit. The answer lies in the fact that trucks are money generating assets and thus, the less downtime, the better for the owner. "When we manage to increase uptime, then we are favoured by the clients, who would surely return to buy again, knowing that their trucks will be on the road, not in the workshop," Tan concluded. 





# The Original is The Best

**E**very genuine WABCO part is made of high-grade materials and is rigorously tested by ZF before leaving our factories. And from the moment of manufacture, every part has the full support of ZF's worldwide customer service network of thousands of authorized dealers and workshops.

As a tier one supplier working with the world's leading Original Equipment manufacturers in the commercial vehicle industry, ZF's has the experience, commitment and scale to meet the most rigorous production and safety standards. As of 2020, WABCO is part of ZF, allowing it to leverage on the distribution network and production expertise.

## Protecting Customers and Partners

ZF's commitment goes beyond providing high-quality automotive parts. The company is devoted to guaranteeing the safety and satisfaction of our customers, actively combating counterfeit products to safeguard your investment and well-being. If you are unsure about the origin of any parts, their representatives stand ready to assist you in verifying the authenticity of your products.

If you would want to know if your parts are genuine, there are a few mechanisms that will tell you. First of all, WABCO original parts supplied within ZF's independent aftermarket network are delivered to you in this singular, uniquely secure and easily traceable package. And whatever the size of the box that your order arrives in, the packaging will always be identical, with a security seal, uniquely coded product label and matching serial number. Every package is closed with at least one tamperproof security seal. Once opened, a broken seal is clear for all to see. It will say 'opened' in six languages and there's nothing anyone can do to reverse it. This means that you know if you are the first to open the box.

The uniquely coded security product labels make it easy to identify that you have a WABCO Original in your hands. Thanks to the tesa PrioSpot technology, every WABCO package carries a unique serial number that is impossible to reproduce and can be immediately verified online. And to make your inventory easier, the label gives the date of packaging, product number and description and delivery note. Should you detect any suspicious parts, you can report the matter to this hotline - 012-6697383

The company aims to shed light on the dangers of counterfeit parts. The resemblance of counterfeit parts to genuine ones is often misleading, concealing the potential risks related to safety and economic impact. The initiative of ZF is more than a campaign; it's a promise to their customers to provide education and awareness about the real, The Original is The Best, and the importance of using authentic parts.

## Legal Aspects

Product piracy is the illegal imitation, copying, or counterfeiting of products. At the very minimum, an industrial property right – patent, utility model, design – is breached.

The manufacturers of piracy products usually have no development or technological expertise for the imitated original product. Indicators are prices


that are unusual for the market and products being offered via previously unused sales channels. Unfortunately, nowadays often only specialists are able to clearly identify counterfeit or falsified products and replica. Anybody who puts counterfeit products into circulation is liable to prosecution. Here, it is sufficient if the purchaser has obtained the goods from a dubious source at low prices that are unusual for the market.

Manufacturers often advertise that their products present improved characteristics compared to the original parts. However, their statement is often only based on one certain feature. In this context, it should be taken into consideration that the respective original product has specially been tailored to its operational environment. The improvement of a feature may lead to deterioration of the overall system.

For manufacturers of cheap imitations, the prescribed quality tests for the automobile application are not usually profitable. Strength and endurance problems of individual products may not be noticed.

## Fast Facts

•Most commonly faked ZF parts: 'LEMFÖRDER' chassis parts, 'SACHS' clutches, 'TRW' brake pads & WABCO valves

•The most 'gruesome' find: Formerly inflated airbags 'remanufactured' into the steering wheel with no functionality... now just imagine if your child was given a lift in this vehicle? 





By: Bhushan Mhapralkar

# VECV Co-Creates The Pro X Series E-Truck

*VECV has entered the two-3.5 tonne four-wheel category by co-creating the Pro X Series with customers-operators in the respective segment.*

**T**he two-to-3.5 tonne small electric commercial vehicle category is one of the fastest growing in India. It is fast growing with the launch of new vehicles such as the Pro X Series e-truck of Volvo Eicher Commercial Vehicles (VECV).

Co-created with the customers/operators in the category, the small electric commercial vehicle was formally launched at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. The launch coincided with 17 years of VECV's journey as a joint venture between Eicher Motors and the Volvo Group for manufacture of trucks, buses, powertrains and more.

Built at the company's new 'Greenfield' plant at Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh), which commenced operations in 2020, the Pro X Series e-truck has a GVW of 3.5 tonnes. The payload is about 1 750 kg.

With an eye on a segment that has grown in the last eight years at a CAGR of eight percent (including the impact of the pandemic), according to S S Gill, Chief Commercial Officer, VE Commercial Vehicles, the Pro X Series is made at a plant that is situated over a land parcel of 147.8 acres. It is roughly 220 km to the north-east of its key manufacturing facility (that includes an R&D centre, the Volvo Eicher PowerTrain plant and a truck and bus manufacturing unit) at Pithampur near Indore. The Volvo Eicher PowerTrain plant produces advanced ICEs for the Volvo Group as well as for VECV heavy duty vehicles.



With half the 80,000 units capacity dedicated to the Pro X Series small commercial vehicles (the other half is dedicated to building Pro Series light and medium duty trucks), the Bhopal plant of the company is modern and Industry 4.0 compliant.

It is designed to support the company's exports plans as well. VECV currently exports to about 41 markets around the globe. Entering the small commercial vehicle space as a logical extension of its leadership position in the light and medium duty commercial vehicle segments, the Pro X Series has been engineered with the rise in demand for such vehicles in lastmile delivery application by sectors such as e-commerce, FMCG, parcel, courier, perishable good, food e-commerce etc. Many of the companies in these sectors are particularly concerned about their ESG compliance.

Of the opinion that the last-mile electric four-wheel vehicle is underserved despite rapid growth, Gill averred, "The segment has space for more players to enter." With the engineers at VECV choosing to co-create the Pro X Series e-truck with customer soporators in the segment that it aims at, there are attributes such as the parking brake on the right side of the driver's seat, an 'automatic mapping' of eco mode and power mode with an indication on the digital dashboard that are an interesting outcome.

VECV has termed some of such features as industry first. They are clearly a result of the efforts to understand the needs of the customers with an intention to provide an efficient solution. For example, on the suggestion of customers-operators in the reefer segment, the company has armed the Pro X Series e-truck with a reefer body with a temperature indicator.

A 'ground-up' project that is also innovative, according to Gill, the Pro X Series e-truck is equipped with two batteries to serve different application requirements. One battery is of 32 kWh and another is of 40 kWh. Both the batteries are part of an electric powertrain, which promises best-in-class energy efficiency. The smaller capacity battery could be used for last-mile delivery operation in a city, whereas the bigger capacity battery would allow the vehicle to execute mofussil or occasional inter-city runs.



With a 320-volt architecture and liquid cooling, the Pro X Series e-truck offers a drive range of between 140 and 160 km on a single charge. It is laced with an all-metal cabin that assures safety to the occupants. Measuring 1.65m in width, it is air-conditioned and has a driver state monitoring system.

With an industry-leading turning radius and ample glass area to minimise blind spots, the e-truck is supported by VECV's 'Uptime Centre'. It is also one of the first such vehicles to possess FOTA enabled telematics for 'over-the-air' updates.

To be offered via a dedicated 'born retail' channel that would include an outlet dedicated to the sales and service of Eicher Pro X Series e-truck, the experience for the customers will be regarding advanced digital tools with personalised service. With convenience and accessibility being the key words, VECV has entered strategic collaboration with charging point operators and charger manufacturers.

As a body-on-chassis construction, the Pro X Series e-truck sports a strong ladder frame. The suspension setup consists of parabolic leaf springs at the front and leaf springs at the rear. Benefitting from the manufacturer's decades of experience and leadership position in the light and medium duty commercial vehicle segments, Sachin Agarwal, Executive Vice President and Head of Product Development, VE Commercial Vehicles, mentioned that the Pro X Series e-truck is a result of efforts to create a vehicle with best-in-class energy efficiency.

This is in line with the attention of FMCG companies, e-commerce companies and others to increasingly focus on ESG compliance. To be offered with a CNG and diesel ICE engine at a later stage, the Pro X Series e-truck is engineered to ensure a quicker ROI, it looks like. Operation over predictive routes, predictive cycles and a certain km of running daily should make this possible in the case of certain last-mile delivery areas.

"We have leveraged our legacy of market leadership in Light and Medium Duty Trucks and our track record of innovation to create this best-in-class range of vehicles. Co-developed with customers to meet their specific needs, the Eicher Pro X charts a new path into the Small Commercial Vehicle segment. It is an embodiment of Eicher's brand philosophy, 'Nayi Soch, Naye Raaste'," said Vinod Aggarwal, Managing Director, VE Commercial Vehicles, at the launch of the small electric commercial vehicle along with Sophia Helena Frandberg, the Chairperson of VE Commercial Vehicles.

**Made in a modern Industry 4.0 compliant facility**

Set amid a green countryside on the outskirts of Bhopal, the VECV advanced manufacturing facility at Bhopal is Industry 4.0 compliant. It has a capacity to produce up to 40 000 Pro X Series vehicles per annum. Another 40 000 per annum vehicle capacity is dedicated to the manufacture of Pro Series light and medium duty trucks. The final assembly hall of both – Pro X Series and Pro Series – are situated one besides the other

The assembly of Pro X Series starts at the body shop (or Body-In-White shop), where the panels are welded together to make the cab. Kuka robots ensure finer tolerances and efficient processes. For the Volvo Group's involvement, the line layout in the press shop is an outcome of much virtual simulation with the use of proprietary software.



The Pro X Series' BIW shop was set in a record time of 26 months and includes human-intervention free processes, according to Gill. "The first cab," he informed, "rolled out of the line in August 2024." "Regular periodic reviews, meeting and fast approvals were in order to achieve this feat," he explained.

The modern paint shop – that includes an electro-dipping process to ensure a long-lasting service – does 90 microns of base coat and top coat collectively. A twin turntable at the end of the conveyor coming out of the paint shop directs the Pro X Series 'painted' cab to its TCF line, which is manned by trained women workers. The paint shop is also replete with a modern cab staking facility post being painted. There is a two-pot elevator besides the twin turntable. It helps to get the 'painted' cab on the trim line.

of the Pro X Series – termed as Assembly Line 2 – is replete with an efficient (skillet and plastic slat) set of conveyors as part of the Industry 4.0 standards. Interestingly, it is the line that feeds tyres to the underbody line. The entire setup reflects modernity and an attention to superior productivity and efficiency. Attention is also paid to emission reduction at every stage.



With an engine buffer and dressing line in close proximity to the cabin trim line (it will be used when the ICE variants are introduced), it is the trim line where the cab is fitted with trim parts such as seats, dashboard, cabin wiring, door trim, roof trim etc. The cabin EMS gets the cab to a point of marriage with the chassis on a skillet conveyor further on.

A four-post elevator gets the chassis with cab on the underbody line where the underbody EMS facilitates the fitting of axles, marrying of electric powertrain with the chassis, controllers, cooling system, tyres etc. The assembly line



An elevation change leads the Pro X Series on the final line on an efficient plastic slat conveyor. It is at the end of this line that the small electric commercial vehicle rolls out.





### Driving the Pro X Series

Climb into the driver's seat of the Pro X Series e-truck and the view outside is facilitated by the large windows and a windscreen. Turn the key and there is no sound of anything whirring or a couple of pistons moving down inside the block. The only indication of action is an array of lights and a digital letter or two light up on the instrument panel.

Most of the lights that appear go off in a few seconds. Only the very essential remain. With the brake pedal pressed and the gear shifter lever in 'N', it requires another half turn of the key to get the electric powertrain to come to life. This is done with the brake pedal pressed and the gear shifter in 'N'.

The ECU throws up a 'Ready' sign on the top of the instrument panel, indicating in turn that the vehicle is ready to spring in action. Shift the gear lever to 'D', let go off the brake pedal and shift the foot to the accelerator pedal.

The vehicle smartly moves away from standstill with the only sound being that of the chiller. With no clutch to deal with, the Pro X Series is easy to pilot. The gear shifter with a small 'lock-unlock' knob on the side is located on a tiny centre console that forms part of a simple yet elegant looking dashboard.

The dashboard has an infotainment unit at the top centre, hinting in turn at a modern turn out of things. The all-digital instrument panel has the eco and power mode indication on the left side. The right side has the battery regen indication. A vertical green stalk besides the speedo indication conveys the battery charge. On the other side is the battery system temperature indicator.

Accumulating speed with good verve, the Pro X Series e-truck feels refined and 'sorted'. Speeds to the tune of 80 kmph were achieved on the road in the vicinity of VECV's Bhopal plant. When it was time to turn around as the road ended, the e-truck showed its prowess with a tight turning radius.

Easy to drive with no clutch to operate, the Pro X Series small commercial vehicle is ergonomically well engineered. With an emphasis on energy efficiency, the indication from Eco to Power mode changes as per the push of the accelerator pedal or its release.

With an eye on weight distribution, gradeability and thermal efficiency, the





battery is located 'mid-ship' under the load body. The power electronics is in the compartment under the driver and co passenger seat.

Power is delivered to the rear wheels through a motor that is situated adjacent to a live axle. Said to be 10 percent more energy efficient than its competitors on date, the Pro X Series e-truck comes across as a well-engineered product.

**In this exclusive interview, S S Gill, Chief Commercial Officer, VE Commercial Vehicles (VECV), adds insights into the business.**

**What led to VECV entering the small commercial vehicle segment by developing the Pro X series?**

VECV has been the market leader in the five- to 18-tonne segments. It has a market share of about 35 percent. Its market share in the heavy-duty segments is growing and involves the introduction of new products. The market share in the entry-level heavy-duty truck segment is about 28 percent and consists of the 3000 Series trucks. In the heavy-duty tipper segment, the company has roughly 40 percent market share with its 350 hp offerings. The growth in buses has been substantial with a strong positioning in school bus segment for the last 30 years.

VECV has been filling up the white spaces. With no room to progress beyond 55-tonne at the top, attention was paid to invade the sub-five-tonne segment. The two- to 3.5-tonne segment was chosen because it has grown quite rapidly in the last eight years at a G+CAGR of about eight percent. This includes the impact of the pandemic! The segment between two- and 3.5-tonne is driven by last-mile delivery applications such as e-commerce, FMCG, parcel, courier etc.

**What was the reason to develop an electric small commercial vehicle and then follow with IC variants?**

With the application sectors in the last-mile delivery segment growing rapidly and being underserved, VECV chose to develop an electric small commercial vehicle. It employed a customer-centric approach, leveraging its experience in light-duty trucks. As a market leader in light-duty trucks, entry into small commercial vehicle segment amounted to logical progression. The Pro X Series was co-created with the customers as a 'ground-up' product that would be innovative and be an outcome of some rare insights gathered about the working of operators in the respective segment.

**What was the involvement of Volvo Trucks in the development of the Pro X Series as a joint venture partner?**

A step up in technology has been the key part of the joint venture between Volvo and Eicher. It is in place for the last 17 years. Technology steps up or enablement made it easier to realise, incorporate the feedback and insights received from the customers. Over the 17 years of association between the two partners, the effect has been of a 'melting pot'. It would be hard to distinguish who brings what to the table.

As part of the association between Volvo and Eicher, VECV as a joint venture company absorbed and implemented the global learning processes of the former. These have now become well entrenched into the system. Volvo's global development process – which is extensive in terms of validation and verification – was adopted in the engineering of the Pro Series trucks. The process resulted in a range that is robust in its construction, reliable and customercentric. The deeper understanding of technology was had from Volvo's experience in making trucks across the globe for the last 80 years. This, in terms of the engineering and product development processes, for example. Through various development processes, a lot of inputs have come from Volvo in the area of reliability, testing etc. A lot of learning has come in the case of electric vehicle development too.

**As an electric and ICE architecture, what was Volvo's contribution towards the development of Pro X Series beyond processes? Volvo is producing one of the best e-trucks in the world in the form of Aero Series today.**

There are teams that worked on multiple areas. Many synergies connect Volvo and Eicher through their association in terms of design, manufacturing, aftermarket processes (the customer-facing processes) etc. The synergies also include powertrain technologies that ensure superior reliability. The use of valve guide material, for example, to ensure utmost reliability and performance.

Much exchange of knowledge, data and innovation takes place. While the smart cell robot would make an interesting example, an exchange of know-how regarding the most recent technologies, innovations and processes takes place regularly. Also regarding testing and validation, regarding software that could be used to create a line layout at a new facility taking into consideration the time a skilled technician will take to assemble a certain module or component on to the vehicle at a respective station even before the line is 'physically' installed.

The areas of cooperation between the two companies is wide and large – the world-class software of Volvo Group helping VECV to not only set up manufacturing facilities but to carry out global sourcing. Also to develop ECUs and other hardware; to develop new software etc. They are quite 'melted' too in their way of functioning.

**Does that mean that Volvo Trucks has contributed to the design of the powertrains of the Pro X Series?**

There is nothing like an engine design coming from Volvo. It is rather about the technology coming from Volvo Group where things could be directly embedded in



the working of various processes, or as per the engineering processes. Consider a telematic solution, for example. There are multiple ways and multiple technological options to develop it. What VECV did was to develop the capability and features as per the customers' needs in India. Attention was paid towards the signals coming out of the ECU and its intended purpose. In Europe, the same solution may be called as something else and in India it may be called as something else. The point is, there is criss-crossing of interesting information and know-how between the two organisations. Consider FOTA (Firmware-Over-The-Air) as a concept, for example. It was discussed even before the pandemic. It has now become a norm. The Pro X Series will be introduced as FOTA enabled product range.

**What is the innovative approach VECV is taking with the Pro X Series since it is aiming at a segment that is being populated by legacy and young players?**

In the segment that is growing at a higher rate than the other segments, there are currently three large players. Expected to cross the 400,000-unit mark with eight percent kind of figures, the segment has space for every player to operate. VECV appreciates competition. It believes that competition helps to make it better. The company is confident of itself in an increasingly competitive environment since it is agile, has an ability to innovate and listen to the customers. The products offered under the Eicher and Volvo brands have been the preferred products for years together. The company is confident of accumulating a good share of the two- to 3.5-tonne segment that the Pro X Series is aiming at. It is implementing a customer-centric approach through a focus on innovation and technology enablement. This is where the support of Volvo is making a difference. Consider this: when others were struggling to make BS6 trucks, VECV found it easy to make them since it was already producing and supplying Euro6 engine to Volvo out of India starting from 2013. It was easy for the company to understand what goes right and what goes wrong in the application of the respective technology in trucks and buses right down to the level where what would drivers do and what would the technicians do. It was at that time that a decision was taken to embed telematics technology into every BS6 truck and bus sold with two years of 'uptime' services.

**Every commercial vehicle manufacturer today has an uptime centre and is offering telematics as a standard fitment. In the case of Pro X Series, what are you offering that is unique?**

VECV has been developing new technologies and products by accessing knowledge and much more from the Volvo Group. It is applying knowledge and experience gained over the years from operating in the Indian market. In the case of the uptime centre, a VECV team visited the North American operations of Volvo Trucks in Greensboro. It is from there that the Volvo and Mack brand of trucks are catered to. Many features that were not needed here were dropped. Those that were needed here were added. The learnings from Greensboro were 'melted' with the years of understanding of the Indian market to develop the uptime centre and the technologies around it. Innovation on that front continues. Every time one logs into the 'My Eicher' app, a new feature is found.

Talking of the Pro X Series, unique is the way the suggestions of customers operating in the segment were incorporated. This was during the use of vehicles for couple of months in real-world conditions by them and their drivers. This is how the vehicle was co-created with customers. This helped to carry out

the necessary prototype validation involving real use 'testing' and resulted in over 200 improvisations. The positioning of the parking brake on the right side, for example. Also, minor changes to ensure better leg space that would eventually realise into a significant difference for the driver/operator. Even complex suggestions such as larger cargo space yet smaller turning radius were had. Suggestions about providing a temperature control unit for reefer application were also received. Rather than an aftermarket fitment, the suggestion was for the OEM to provide it.

The Pro X Series trucks are equipped with an 'Eco' and 'Power' mode that are automatically activated as per the suggestion of the customers. In the bigger Pro Series trucks, there is a switch that has to be pressed to change the mode instead.

**With the production of the Pro X Series on at the Bhopal plant, does the strategy to launch an electric variant followed by ICE variants still hold?**

The strategy to launch an electric variant first at Bharat Mobility 2024 still holds. The ICE engine variants will follow the electric variant. This is because VECV sees a clear opportunity in sustainable transport solutions. It is also aligning itself with the government's push for electric vehicles through the FAME and PM E Drive schemes. A clear opportunity is seen in the lastmile 'urban' delivery space as of current. An electric truck, for example, is appreciated by the residents as it is capable of delivering milk, grocery etc. every day in the housing premises without making a noise. On the other hand, charging is an important factor. In the face of rapid electrification, it is mushrooming in urban areas.

**What about exports?**

The domestic market is currently the area of focus. Emphasis is on creating a market pull rather than push. Exporting to 41 countries, VECV has done some mapping, but the focus currently is on the home market. To cater to the export markets, market-specific customisations and local-regional regulations will have to be considered and incorporated. Markets like Africa and the Middle East, for example, are left hand drive markets. As a modular platform, specific changes will need to be done. Market-specific norms and requirements will have to be looked into. This would be regarding the vehicle length, cargo body dimensions, air-conditioning etc. VECV will therefore take the same route to exports that it has taken for its other products.

**What are the numbers you are looking for with the Pro X Series?**

Our priority is to ensure that the vehicle addresses the specific requirements of the customers. This will ensure good numbers. We want to build on the capacities that have been put in place at Bhopal and ensure the vehicle delivers superior value.

**Would VECV establish a dedicated sales and service channel for the Pro X Series?**

A dedicated network for the Pro X Series has been planned, keeping in mind the customer profile of such vehicles. The profile is different from that of the other commercial vehicles the company offers. The emphasis is on customer experience and turnaround times. The emphasis is also on the size of bays or display area and the overall footprint of the dealership given the vehicle dimensions and market positioning. The thought process is based on the fact that no one comes to the showroom to check out a heavy-duty truck, but he or she will come to the showroom to see and 'test' drive a small commercial vehicle. **T**



# The Evolution of the Commercial Tyre Industry

*A Journey of Innovation and the Path to Sustainability*

## Pioneering the Future: From Pneumatic to Radial Commercial Tyres

The global commercial tyre industry is a cornerstone of modern transportation, embodying a rich history of innovation and technological progress. From John Boyd Dunlop's invention of the pneumatic tyre in 1888 to Michelin's introduction of the radial steel wire tyre in the 1940s, the industry has continually evolved to meet demands for safety, efficiency, and performance. Key milestones include the adoption of tubeless tyres in the 1950s and the extensive use of synthetic rubber during World War II, which addressed material shortages while enhancing durability.

## The Drive for Performance: Weight, Heat, Speed, and Endurance

As infrastructure surged across the globe, the demand for tyres capable of enduring long-distance travel, blistering speeds, and relentless heat soared. However, traditional bias tyres struggled to keep pace, revealing critical weaknesses in high speeds, distance, safety, and fuel efficiency. This sparked an era of relentless innovation - where engineers and researchers pushed the boundaries of tyre technology to develop radial tyres, a game-changer designed to overcome these limitations. With enhanced flexibility, superior heat factor management, and extended tread life, radial tyres revolutionized the industry.

At the core of it all lies Cost Per Kilometre (CPK), the ultimate measure of efficiency - where every kilometre squeezed from a tyre makes a difference. This is also most often in relation to the durability, maintenance, and discipline of the fleets in managing their tyres to get the most out of it. As roads stretch farther and loads grow heavier, the battle against heat and wear becomes the true test of endurance.

## The Bias vs. Radial Battle: A Game of Heat and Physics

The replacement of bias tyres with radial ones was a seismic shift driven by the raw physics of heat management and gas law principles. Bias-ply tyres, with their crisscrossed layers, are notorious for generating excessive heat due to internal friction - a recipe for disaster. This heat buildup doesn't just accelerate wear; it can melt inner tubes, cause sudden loss of air pressure, or trigger catastrophic blowouts. These flaws slash efficiency and turn bias tyres into a ticking time bomb on high-stress journeys.

Radial tyres, by contrast, are a marvel of engineering. Their advanced construction, reinforced with steel belts, dissipates heat like a breeze, a top belt that provides stability and maximum contact area with the road surface, boosting longevity and reliability.







### **The Global Shift from Bias to Radial Tyres: A Slow Yet Steady Transition in the West**

The transition from bias-ply to radial tyres was a gradual process in most parts of the world. In Europe, Japan, and the U.S., radialization began after its invention in the 1940s, but it only took off in the 70s and it required over 50 years of refinement to cement industry standards. This slow and steady evolution reflected the challenge of reshaping well-established markets, where manufacturers had to retool production lines, and fleets had to adapt to new performance characteristics. Meanwhile, many developing countries have yet to fully transition, struggling with industrial, logistical, and infrastructural hurdles that hinder widespread adoption.

### **The Rising Demand for High-Performance Tyres**

As road networks expanded globally, the demand for commercial tyres capable of withstanding long-distance travel, higher speeds, and extreme heat grew exponentially. While developed nations gradually integrated radial tyres, regions undergoing rapid infrastructure booms had to accelerate this transition to meet modern transportation needs. The shift was particularly evident in markets that experienced a surge in highway construction and logistics expansion, where outdated bias-ply tyres proved insufficient.

### **Different Approaches: Gradual Innovation vs. Regulatory Push**

In many regions, the transition was driven by a natural industry progression, guided by technological advancements and consumer demand. However, in some high-growth economies, government intervention played a decisive role. China, for instance, compressed decades of radialization into just a few years, propelled by its infrastructure boom and the introduction of the 2015 ban on bias tyres on highways. This regulatory push forced manufacturers to adapt quickly, setting a precedent for policy-driven industry transformations. In contrast, the West relied on a more professional adoption based on needs, where innovation and performance benefits naturally steered the market toward radial technology as the economy grows.

### **The Boom in Commercial Tyre Manufacturing**

With surging demand, the expansion of commercial tyre manufacturing followed different trajectories across regions. In Europe, Japan, and the U.S., radial technology underwent decades of meticulous refinement before becoming the industry norm. They were putting a lot of focus on standards and specifications such as safety, fuel consumption, and wear rates which essentially caused the cost of production to rise, and thus, eliminating small players overtime. In contrast, high-growth markets saw the rapid emergence of factories - many of them producing multiple brands under the same roof - focusing initially on high-volume, budget-friendly production rather than premium quality. There were practically minimal standards as a guideline, and the boom in volume materialized at a relatively cheap cost.

China's transformation, however, was not just rapid - it was staggering. The country radialized its commercial tyre industry at an unprecedented scale, setting up hundreds of factories at lightning speed. It was all done in sheer volume, with manufacturing capacity ramping up so quickly that it left industry veterans worldwide in awe.

### **Challenges in the Transition**

China's radical shift to radial tyres came so fast that even industry specialists struggled to keep up. The entire market was disrupted overnight, leaving manufacturers and fleet operators grappling with the fundamental physics behind the new technology. Unlike the West, where tyre manufacturers rigorously test their products in advanced laboratories and controlled circuit roads, China took a drastically different approach - letting the market itself be the testing ground. With little regard for standardization beyond cost reduction, tyres were subjected to real-world conditions by unsuspecting users. The result? Widespread failures as truckers, accustomed to the brute resilience of bias tyres, continued overloading radials, pushing them far beyond their intended limits. Some early manufacturers saw claim rates soar to an alarming 30-50 percent, a stark testament to a system where affordability often took precedence over engineering integrity. In China, the standard was not defined by stringent testing, but by trial and error on the open road - a chaotic evolution that redefined the industry at breakneck speed.

### **The Current Landscape: A World in Transition**

Today, the global tyre landscape remains a mix of adoption levels. While the West and Japan fully embraced radial technology long ago, Asia remains in transition. China and West Malaysia have completed the shift, while ASEAN markets continue to see a blend of bias and radial tyres, each adapting at its own pace. The evolution from bias to radial tyres reflects not just a technological leap but also the varying speeds at which markets adapt to change - some through gradual refinement and others through rapid transformation.

China's breakneck evolution has left a lasting impact on the industry, proving that change, when driven by necessity and sheer scale, can happen at an unprecedented pace. Yet, the aftershocks of such rapid transformation continue to be felt. As the dust settles, the world is still making sense of the shift - understanding not just how radial tyres work but how an entire industry was reshaped almost overnight.

### **The Competitive Landscape: China vs. the West**

**A Clash of Safety, Scale, Strategy, and Survival**

The global commercial tyre industry is a battlefield where two contrasting philosophies collide - China's relentless pursuit of scale and cost leadership versus the West's unwavering commitment to safety, efficiency, precision, and longevity. While Western manufacturers have meticulously refined rolling resistance, fuel efficiency, and the multi-life concept critical for retreading, China has focused on sheer production volume, aggressively expanding its manufacturing capacity at breakneck speed.

**The West: Masters of Efficiency, Durability, and Retreading**

This obsession with efficiency led to the dominance of the multi-life concept, where casings are engineered for durability, making them ideal for multiple retreads. Retreading isn't just an afterthought in the West - it's a fundamental pillar of their business model, embedded within a broader 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) framework. Global giants like Michelin, Goodyear, Bridgestone, and Continental don't just build tyres to last; they have integrated sophisticated retreading and recycling ecosystems, ensuring extended tyre life and drastically lowering the total cost per kilometre (CPK) for fleets. Every stage of a tyre's life cycle - from production to disposal - is carefully regulated, reinforcing an industry-wide commitment to sustainability.

The Western approach isn't just about performance; it's about discipline and responsibility. Mature government frameworks enforce stringent environmental policies, ensuring that used tyres don't just end up as waste but are systematically repurposed, retreaded, or recycled. Strict regulatory standards, such as the EU's E-mark certification, mandate compliance with rigorous safety, efficiency, and environmental requirements. Unlike unregulated markets that focus solely on cost-cutting, the West operates within a well-structured system where innovation thrives under clearly defined rules - setting the gold standard for sustainability and circular economy practices in the global tyre industry.

**China: The Relentless Pursuit of Scale and Expansion**

On the other side of the spectrum, China's tyre industry has evolved through a far more chaotic yet extraordinarily aggressive path. After 2015, the

landscape saw an intense period of upheaval - companies collapsed, newcomers flooded the market, and only the strongest survived. Those who stabilized didn't just survive; they expanded at an unrelenting pace, locked in a battle of scale and strategy. The primary challenge? Driving costs lower, often by leveraging alternative materials and manufacturing techniques to maintain price dominance.

While a few forward-thinking Chinese manufacturers pushed toward premiumisation, the majority were embroiled in brutal price wars, leveraging economies of scale to flood global markets with competitively priced tyres. Prices plummeted by over 50% from their initial domestic launch, making Chinese tyres nearly impossible to ignore. But with affordability came uncertainty - safety and quality standards remained ambiguous at best. While China had embraced Industry 4.0 advancements in automation, smart manufacturing, and AI-driven production, the absence of clear regulatory enforcement meant that buyers were often left in the dark. Were there standards? If so, did the public even know what they were? The lack of structured compliance created a market where cost-cutting frequently overshadowed safety considerations. But it wasn't just about price, but will standardization ever catch up to scale?

**Technology vs. Volume: The Clash of Strategies**

Despite these strides, challenges remain. High-performance tyres demand cutting-edge manufacturing precision, and while China's top-tier manufacturers have made significant progress, many still struggle to meet the strict performance standards set by the West. The fundamental difference lies in how technology is applied - Western manufacturers invest in research and development to enhance safety, durability, fuel efficiency, and retreadability, ensuring that each innovation drives long-term value. In contrast, China's approach to technological advancement is often centered on cost reduction, prioritizing mass production efficiency to offer tyres at the lowest possible price.

The result is a market divided into two extremes. Unlike the West, where strict industry standards enforce consistency, China's market remains fragmented. While premium Chinese brands are making a name for themselves by closing the performance gap, lower-tier manufacturers continue flooding the market with budget-friendly options of varying quality. The lack of universal regulatory enforcement creates disparities that force fleet operators to navigate a minefield of choices - some delivering world-class performance, others cutting corners in pursuit of affordability. Ultimately, the battle isn't just about price or performance; it's about whether technology is wielded as a tool for excellence or a means to undercut competition.

**The Future of the Global Tyre War**

The global commercial tyre industry is no longer a mere battle of price points - it has evolved into a high-stakes war of technology, performance, and strategic application.

- The West continues to refine safety, rolling resistance, fuel efficiency, and multi-life casing durability, cementing its dominance in the high-performance and retreading sectors with a matured 3R plan
- China, however, plays the volume game like no other. Having mastered economies of scale, its top-tier manufacturers are rapidly advancing, forcing global players to rethink their strategies.
- The East remains in flux - companies rise and fall, and those who withstand the storm emerge stronger, bigger, and more competitive.

China is no longer just a low-cost producer - it is a disruptor, a challenger, and a force that no one in the tyre industry can afford to underestimate. Its aggressive expansion has introduced a new complexity into fleet operations worldwide, particularly in calculating the true cost per kilometre (CPK). While Western tyres are evaluated based on a balance of durability, fuel efficiency, and retreadability, China's relentless push for affordability has made CPK calculations increasingly perplexing. The initial price advantage is undeniable, but variables such as damage rates, fuel consumption, and casing longevity create a trade-off that many fleets struggle to quantify.

Yet, despite these uncertainties, the market continues to gravitate toward Chinese tyres. The sheer price attractiveness makes them impossible to ignore, leading many operators to experiment - driven by the hope of striking the right balance between cost savings and performance. This trend is amplified by a rising global appetite



for new commercial tyres, a consumption rate that has surged faster than overall economic expansion. The battle for global dominance is far from over. The question remains: Who will control the next decade - the disciplined engineers of the West, who prioritize structured efficiency, or the relentless expansionists of the East, who redefine the rules of competition at every turn?

### Challenges and Opportunities in the Commercial Tyre Sector

The global commercial tyre industry is at a pivotal juncture, shaped by a multitude of challenges and emerging opportunities:

#### Key Industry Challenges

- **Volatile Raw Material Costs:** The commercial tyre sector is heavily influenced by fluctuations in natural rubber, synthetic rubber, carbon black, and steel prices, which directly impact production costs and profitability.
- **Stringent Environmental Regulations:** Governments worldwide are enforcing stricter emission controls and disposal policies for end-of-life tyres, pushing manufacturers toward more sustainable practices.
- **Durability vs. Fuel Efficiency Trade-Off:** While fleets demand high-mileage, puncture-resistant tyres, modern regulations emphasize lower rolling resistance to reduce fuel consumption and carbon emissions - posing a challenge in balancing both attributes.
- **Supply Chain Disruptions:** Global shipping constraints, geopolitical tensions, and raw material shortages continue to disrupt tyre supply chains, affecting both availability and pricing.
- **Material Innovation & Sustainability Pressures:** The industry is increasingly exploring alternative materials such as reclaimed rubber and rubber dust to offset rising raw material costs and meet sustainability targets. However, ensuring these alternatives maintain durability, performance, and safety standards remains a critical challenge for manufacturers.

#### Opportunities for Commercial Tyre Innovation in Relation to ESG

- **Next-Generation Smart Tyres:** The future of commercial tyres lies in integrated sensor technology, providing real-time insights into tyre pressure, temperature, tread wear, and load balance. These advancements enhance fleet safety, maintenance efficiency, and fuel economy, driving cost savings for operators.
- **Advanced Casing and Retreading Solutions:** With commercial fleet owners seeking longer-lasting, cost-effective solutions, manufacturers are investing in high-performance casings designed for multiple retreading cycles, extending tyre lifespans while reducing environmental impact.
- **Sustainability and Circular Economy Models:** The adoption of recycled materials, bio-based rubber, and carbon-neutral manufacturing is becoming a central focus, aligning with the broader push toward sustainable tyre solutions.
- **AI-Driven Predictive Maintenance:** The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and big data analytics allows fleet operators to anticipate tyre failures before they occur, reducing downtime and optimizing fleet performance.

#### The Five Pillars of Tyre Segmentation

Across global markets, tyre segmentation is now clearly defined by application:

- **Long-Haul:** High-mileage, fuel-efficient tyres built for extensive highway use.
- **Regional:** Designed for mixed highway and urban applications, prioritizing durability.
- **Mixed-Use:** Versatile, all-purpose tyres balancing load, mileage, and road adaptability.
- **Off-Road:** Heavy-duty tyres engineered for extreme terrain and rugged conditions.
- **Urban:** Optimized for stop-and-go traffic, prioritizing wear resistance and ride comfort.

While the West focuses on rolling resistance and fuel efficiency, China has added another dimension - weight tolerance engineering.

#### China's Casing Engineering: Strength Meets Scale

A defining feature of China's commercial tyre industry is its classification system based on weight tolerance. Chinese manufacturers assign point ratings to indicate the percentage of strength of a tyre.



Originally, these ultra-resilient tyres featured reinforced bead and shoulder structures in tube-type configurations. However, technological advancements have pushed them into the high-strength, high-durability tubeless category, further enhancing performance and reliability.

Some Chinese tyres can endure extreme loads. But brute strength alone isn't enough. Heat remains the ultimate adversary - no matter the load rating, tyres begin failing when internal temperatures exceed 80°C, making thermal engineering a critical factor in durability.

#### Segmentation and Standardization: The Path to Sustainability

The commercial tyre industry stands at a pivotal crossroads, where technology, regulatory mandates, and environmental consciousness dictate the next frontier of innovation. The key to navigating this landscape lies in segmentation - not just in product engineering but across markets, distribution channels, and even divisions.

By fine-tuning product offerings to meet specific applications and customer needs, manufacturers can maximize efficiency, optimize resource use, and reinforce their competitive edge. However, as global markets evolve, the standardization of regulations is inevitable - a move that will streamline industry practices and accelerate sustainability objectives.

From advancements in retreading to ESG compliance, the modern tyre industry is no longer just about manufacturing - it's about mastering the art of endurance, efficiency, and environmental responsibility.

**Beyond the Tread: The Hidden Economics and Engineering of Tyre Retreading****The Evolution of Tyre Retreading: From Hot to Cold**

Retreading has long been a crucial part of the industry, reducing waste and improving cost efficiency. The process started with the hot cure method, where pre-vulcanized rubber was applied and moulded onto worn tyres. Hot cure tyre retreading, also known as mold cure retreading, traces its origins back to the early 20th century, gaining traction in the 1920s and 1930s as an industrialized process. Initially, tyre retreading was a manual and labour-intensive method, but advancements in vulcanization technology allowed manufacturers to develop hot cure systems, where pre-vulcanized rubber compounds were applied and cured in a specialized mold under high heat and pressure. This innovation significantly enhanced tread adhesion and performance consistency, making retreaded tyres more reliable for commercial applications. Over the decades, the hot cure method evolved with improvements in tread designs, rubber formulations, and automated curing processes, solidifying its position as a cost-effective and sustainable alternative to new tyre production.

As technology advanced, cold cure (pre-cure) retreading, pioneered by Bandag USA in the 1950s, revolutionized the process by offering a more energy-efficient and cost-effective alternative.

**Retreading Takes Flight: Adoption and Advantages in Key Sectors**

Retreaded tyres have been widely adopted across multiple sectors, including commercial trucking and aviation. A key driver behind this widespread adoption is the discipline of maintenance - a crucial factor in preserving high-quality tyre casings. Well-maintained tyres significantly increase the percentage of casings suitable for multiple retread cycles, maximizing both cost savings and sustainability.

Today, approximately 80-90 percent of civilian aircraft tyres undergo retreading, not just for a single lifecycle but multiple times, with some high-quality casings capable of enduring six to ten retread cycles. This extensive reuse is a testament to the industry's commitment to precision, safety, and

resource efficiency. Driven by stringent aviation safety standards, cost optimization, and environmental responsibility, the meticulous upkeep of casings ensures that retreaded tyres consistently deliver peak performance while dramatically reducing waste and raw material consumption. This synergy of innovation and disciplined maintenance is what continues to propel retreading as a cornerstone of sustainable mobility.

**Leading the Charge: Retreading in Developed Markets**

The adoption of retreaded tyres is significantly higher in developed regions such as the United States and Europe, where stringent regulations, advanced infrastructure, and strong sustainability commitments drive widespread implementation. In these markets, fleet operators and aviation industries prioritize cost efficiency and environmental responsibility, making retreading an essential practice to extend tyre lifespan and reduce waste. As a result, the commercial and aviation sectors in these regions have established robust retreading ecosystems, supported by cutting-edge technology and strict quality control standards. Leading global tyre manufacturers have solidified their positions as industry leaders in retreading, continuously innovating to enhance performance, durability, and sustainability. Their dominance in these regions underscores the strategic importance of retreading as a cost-effective and environmentally friendly solution within the tyre industry.

**The Chinese Tyre Conundrum: Quality vs. Price**

Enter Chinese tyres - the disruptors of the global market. At the premium level, top-tier Chinese manufacturers are closing the gap with European and American standards, producing casings that rival the giants in retreadability and longevity. But at the bottom end of the spectrum, the flood of cheap, disposable tyres has created a major crisis. These budget options, built with subpar safety, casing strength, unpredictable rubber compounds, and fragile belt structures, are often entirely unretreadable and pose a threat to the environment from improper disposals. Fleets may be lured in by their lower upfront cost, but the hidden truth is brutal - a tyre that cannot be retreaded is a tyre doomed to an early grave, a money pit disguised as a bargain.

**Built to Last: The Science Behind Retreadable Tyres**

But why can't all tyres be retreaded? The answer lies in engineering precision, material science, and structural integrity. Retreading isn't just about slapping on a new layer of rubber - it demands a tyre that was built from day one to withstand multiple lifecycles. Weak bead construction, poor heat resistance, inconsistent casing integrity - these hidden flaws are what separate a tyre that lives one life from a tyre that lives many. The best fleet operators don't just buy tyres - they invest in an asset that can be optimized, extended, and strategically managed, all with the importance of safety in mind.

**The Bottom Line: Why Retreading is a Fleet's Best Friend**

In an industry where margins are razor-thin, fuel costs fluctuate, and sustainability is becoming increasingly essential, tyre selection plays a crucial role in long-term cost efficiency. Investing in retreadable, high-quality tyres offers an opportunity to maximize value over time, while single-use options may suit specific operational needs. Ultimately, effective tyre management isn't just about initial costs - it's about optimizing performance, longevity, and total cost per kilometre. Fleets that take a strategic approach to tyre usage are better positioned to enhance both financial and environmental sustainability.

**Malaysia's Commercial Tyre Paradox: A Market at the Crossroads of Efficiency and Waste****Short-Haul Dominance and the Relentless Toll on Tyres**

Unlike vast continents where long-haul trucking stretches across thousands of kilometres, Malaysia's commercial tyre market operates under a completely different reality. With a dense yet highly active logistics network, the vast majority of fleet operations fall within the sub-1 000 km category, dominated by regional and short-haul transport. These conditions create relentless stress on tyres - high braking loads, lateral force from frequent turns, and continuous stop-and-go wear - all of which accelerate heat buildup, a tyre's ultimate nemesis.



Despite the challenging conditions, there remains significant room for improvement in how Malaysian fleets approach tyre longevity. In more mature markets, sustainability and cost efficiency are closely intertwined - every kilometre reduced in rolling resistance, every well-managed retreading cycle, and every AI-driven pressure adjustment contribute to lower cost-per-kilometre (CPK), extended tyre lifespan, and reduced carbon footprints. The key challenge lies in bridging the gap between ESG principles and practical implementation within the industry. Can Malaysia integrate sustainability into its tyre management strategies?

### **The ESG Illusion: Tyre Waste and the Cost of Ignorance**

Malaysia is increasingly emphasizing ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) principles, yet implementing them effectively in the commercial tyre sector remains a work in progress. Maximizing the full potential of premium tyres through proper retreading cycles and structured tyre maintenance presents a significant opportunity to reduce waste and enhance sustainability. However, many fleets still retire tyres earlier than necessary, leading to untapped cost savings and resource efficiency. By adopting a more structured approach to tyre management, the industry can minimize premature replacements, extend tyre lifespans, and contribute to a more sustainable future.

To make matters worse, recycling is becoming an unfortunate necessity, not because of proactive ESG strategies, but because fleets are increasingly using cheap tyres that aren't built for retreading. This shift is driving two dangerous trends:

1. Rising new tyre consumption - As the market sees an increasing reliance on new tyres, overall consumption has surged. However, this growth is not necessarily aligned with proportional economic expansion, raising concerns about long-term cost efficiency and sustainability in fleet operations.
2. A surge in scrap tyre volumes - since non-retreadable casings head straight for disposal, the industry is scrambling for ways to deal with the waste, pushing recycling into the spotlight.

### **The Harsh Reality: Cheap Tyres, Harsh Roads, and Poor Maintenance**

Malaysia's road conditions further amplify the issue. In a rainfall-heavy country tyre wear is significantly higher than in drier climates. Yet, many operators face a dilemma: Do they purchase premium tyres that are safer and with multi-life, or opt for cheaper alternatives that wear out faster but cost less upfront?

In an ideal scenario, disciplined tyre maintenance practices and strict enforcement of regulations would bridge the gap. However, Malaysia faces challenges in this area. Neglecting essential maintenance tasks - such as regular pressure checks, addressing misalignment issues, and implementing structured tyre rotation plans - can lead to premature wear and damages, which are significant factors affecting road safety. This negligence not only escalates operating costs but also raises critical questions about our commitment to safety and awareness of the associated expenses.

To address these concerns, establishing comprehensive Malaysian Standards (MS) for commercial tyres is imperative. Existing standards include:

- MS 224: Retreaded pneumatic tyres for motor vehicles.
- MS 1208: Specification for precured tread for retreading tyres.
- MS 1348: Specification for cushion gum used in precured retreading of tyres.
- MS 1394: Specification for new pneumatic tyres for highway vehicles other than passenger cars.
- MS 1439: Definition of common terms used in the tyre industry - Pneumatic tyres.

Despite the existence of these standards, public awareness and enforcement remain areas for improvement. It is crucial to assess the extent to which the public and enforcement officers are informed about these standards.

### **A Shift Towards Smart Tyre Management**

The Malaysian commercial tyre industry is at a critical crossroads. With increasing awareness of sustainability, rising fuel costs, and mounting pressure to optimize



operational expenses, fleet operators can no longer afford to overlook the efficiency gains that come from the proper selection of tyres, retreading, and the implementation of structured maintenance strategies. The future will belong to those who recognize tyres not as a disposable expense, but as a strategic asset - one that, when managed effectively, can deliver not only lower costs and higher efficiency but also a genuine ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) impact.

The true transformation of the industry hinges on embracing rigorous standards and specifications that govern all aspects of the 3Rs - reduce, reuse, and recycle. This means adopting safety-focused practices that ensure tyres are not just discarded but carefully maintained, retreaded, and recycled, in compliance with internationally recognized regulations. By adhering to stringent safety protocols and technical standards, the industry can mitigate waste, reduce environmental impact, and optimize resource usage.

The question remains: Will Malaysia rise to the challenge, embracing a future where tyres are valued for their longevity and performance through retreading and recycling? Or will it continue to squander valuable resources, bleeding money while drowning in tyre waste, unable to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving, sustainable world? **T**



## Up Close with the HOWO-TX Tipper

*Having seen significant upgrades over the years latest version of the HOWO-TX tipper truck boasts hi-tech and comfort.*



Since their introduction to the Malaysian market, Sinotruk's HOWO trucks have improved by leaps and bounds. With gradual upgrades over the years, the trucks have become more and more attractive. One of the workhorses among the product line-up of the Chinese brand is the HOWO-TX Tipper. Khoo Keh Hann, General Manager of Sino Mobile and Heavy Equipment Sdn Bhd (SMHE) offers a comprehensive walk-around.

First, the HOWO-TX Tipper Truck, offered by (SMHE), is engineered for durability, efficiency, and high-performance payload handling. It is designed to meet the demands of industries such as construction, mining, and quarrying, making it stand out in the heavy-duty segment. Its features make it most suited for these missions.

### Introducing HOWO-TX

Khoo lists the following as highlights: "Take for instance the powerful MC11 Engine; developed with MAN technology, the 440hp MC11 engine delivers 2100Nm of torque, ensuring optimal performance under heavy loads." Operating at lower RPMs within its peak torque range, the engine experiences reduced wear, enhancing longevity and fuel efficiency.

Designed for both on and off-road operations, the HOWO-TX features a reinforced chassis and heavy-duty bucket, ensuring exceptional durability in extreme weather, rough terrains, and demanding job sites.



Meeting the needs of the users, a reinforced chassis for heavy loads with 8+8/300 high-strength steel frames, the HOWO-TX Tipper is designed to endure harsh terrains and high-impact conditions, making it ideal for extreme work environments. Thanks to this, the vehicle is also offering maximised payload efficiency. Its robust, yet lightweight construction, enables operators to transport more material per trip without compromising structural integrity, ensuring higher productivity and reduced operational costs.

### **A Bucket for Any Load**

The H850 steel bucket, delivers a higher strength-to-weight ratio, increasing payload capacity while improving fuel efficiency. The superior wear and impact resistance ensures longevity in extreme conditions. In essence, it offers cost-effective performance, with optimised material thickness for strength without excess weight. As a licensed manufacturer and body builder, SMHE offers custom-made buckets tailored to specific operational needs as well as the option for customers to provide their own bucket, with assembly handled by SMHE. This ensures optimised capacity for various materials (e.g., bulk loads, aggregates, or small quantities). By doing so, trips are minimised, enhancing efficiency and fuel savings. "Ultimately, the goal is also overload prevention, reducing wear and tear on components."

Different industries require tailored solutions. The HOWO-TX Tipper is available with custom bucket sizes, hydraulic systems, and chassis setups, ensuring optimal performance for mining, construction, and agricultural applications.

### **Fast Tipping: Efficiency**

As a tipper, the truck depends on a reliable hydraulic system. The efficient tipping mechanism allows for smooth, controlled unloading, reducing cycle times and increasing job-site efficiency. Equipped with high-capacity hydraulics and an optimised bucket design, the HOWO-TX enables faster unloading, increased material throughput, and reduced downtime, enhancing overall fleet performance. HOWO-TX Tipper trucks are equipped with Hyva hydraulic pumps, a globally recognised brand known for its efficiency, durability, and high performance. These pumps convert engine power into hydraulic pressure, ensuring smooth and reliable tipping operations, even in demanding work conditions.

### **Cabin Comfort**

Functionality extends into the driver-centric cabin design, which is ergonomically built for comfort and practicality. It features electronic air conditioning, adjustable seating, and a sleeper bench to support operators during long shifts in challenging environments. A well-designed cabin enhances driver comfort, safety, and efficiency. The HOWO-TX Tipper truck offers an ergonomic design that reduces driver fatigue during long hours. The air-conditioning and ventilation are adapted for local needs as it is essential for Malaysia's tropical climate. The advanced dashboard and controls are laid out in an intuitive layout for easier operation and better visibility. Overall, the spacious interior and ample storage compartments enhance the driver's convenience and organisation.

An optional sleeper cabin is available for long-haul configurations, allowing drivers to rest comfortably, reducing fatigue and improving overall efficiency.

Khoo said that "With its combination of power, resilience, and efficiency, the HOWO-TX Tipper Truck delivers cost-effective, long-term performance for businesses requiring heavy-duty transport solutions."

### **Built Tough in Malaysia**

The HOWO-TX Tipper Truck is built to deliver reliability, efficiency, and durability in demanding environments. According to Khoo, there are good reasons why businesses should consider adopting it for their fleet. Being designed to meet local weight and safety regulations, these trucks help businesses avoid fines, legal complications, and operational disruptions, providing peace of mind. Beyond this, they offer cost-effective ownership. HOWO-TX tipper trucks offer a competitive upfront cost compared to other models in the same segment. Coupled with fuel efficiency and lower maintenance costs, they present a smart, cost-effective investment for businesses looking to optimise fleet expenses.



**Khoo Keh Hann, General Manager of Sino Mobile and Heavy Equipment Sdn Bhd (SMHE)**

HOWO-TX Tipper Trucks arrive as Completely Knocked Down (CKD) kits and are assembled locally by SMHE under Sinotruk's guidance and supervision. This ensures that each truck meets local regulations while maintaining HOWO's global standards and quality for durability and performance.

Khoo elaborated on the assembly process, starting with the chassis import and assembly. The truck cabin and chassis are imported from Sinotruk while, key structural components are assembled locally to ensure compliance with Malaysian road and load regulations. SMHE manufactures and installs the bucket based on customer specifications. Alternatively, customers can supply their own bucket, which SMHE will assemble onto the chassis.

The tipping mechanism and hydraulic components are installed for efficient load handling and optimal performance. At the end of the assembly process, every truck undergoes rigorous inspections, ensuring it meets durability, safety, and performance standards before delivery.

This local assembly approach, according to him, provides greater flexibility for customers while maintaining HOWO's reputation for strength, durability and payload efficiency.

**Joy After the Purchase**

In Malaysia's competitive tipper truck market, HOWO-TX is said to stand out by delivering unmatched reliability, efficiency, and after-sales support. Those considering giving SMHE the vote of confidence would enjoy comprehensive after sales support. SMHE's after-sales service ensures your investment is protected. Khoo pointed out that the maintenance packages to keep trucks in peak condition. This is made possible thanks to a high spare parts availability for reduced downtime. "Not only that, we offer expert guidance for long-term operational success." Over 1 000 HOWO trucks in Malaysia are maintained by SMHE's experienced team, demonstrating our commitment to quality and reliability.

In the case of tippers, to maintain optimal performance and longevity, regular servicing of the hydraulic system is essential. SMHE advises users to regularly inspect and replace hydraulic oil to ensure smooth operation and prevent contamination. Regular inspections should include checks for leaks, cracks, or wear to avoid pressure loss and system failures. Tipping cylinders and hydraulic pumps should be checked to ensure they function efficiently to prevent downtime and costly repairs. Khoo and his colleagues are confident that with proper maintenance and servicing, HOWO-TX's hydraulic system remains reliable, ensuring efficient and uninterrupted operations in heavy-duty applications.

**Safety Tips for More Trips**

Beyond this, Khoo urged users to always adhere to recommended payload limits to prevent excess wear on the chassis, suspension, and braking system. Distributing loads evenly enhances stability and reduces strain on components. Overloading is a common challenge in the industry. While it may seem like a way to maximise tonnage per trip, it has serious consequences. Higher maintenance costs are incurred due to increased stress on critical components. Overloading brings with it increased fuel consumption, reducing overall efficiency and shortened vehicle lifespan from excessive wear and tear.

"One of the causes of overloading may be to offset high investment and operational costs. However, by investing in HOWO-TX trucks from



SMHE and maintaining them with our affordable servicing packages, businesses can reduce long-term costs without overloading, ensuring reliable performance and durability," he said addressing this issue.

**Efficient Driving Practices**

For maximum enjoyment of the assets, it is recommended that operators train drivers on smooth acceleration, controlled braking, and proper tipping procedures to minimise fuel consumption and mechanical stress. Using HOWO-approved spare parts and lubricants extends the truck's lifespan and ensures peak performance. Since SMHE provides genuine HOWO spare parts, ensuring high reliability and reducing the risk of breakdowns, there is no reason for operators to look for aftermarket parts that may be cheaper, but not on par when it comes to quality.

Regularly tracking fuel efficiency helps identify mechanical issues early, such as engine inefficiencies or underinflated tyres. To do so, transporters can leverage advanced monitoring systems as HOWO EURO V trucks come with a CANBus system, allowing real-time monitoring of crucial parameters. A device can be installed for predictive maintenance, reducing unexpected downtime and improving efficiency.

Khoo emphasised that by following these best practices, customers can extend the lifespan of their HOWO-TX Tipper trucks, reduce maintenance costs, and improve overall operational efficiency.

**Made for Malaysia**

Malaysia's hot and humid conditions, combined with heavy rainfall and rugged terrain, can be tough on trucks. However, HOWO-TX Tippers are engineered to withstand these challenges, ensuring reliability, efficiency, and durability in demanding environments.

- **Reliable Drivetrain for High-Temperature Operation**


HOWO-TX engines and transmissions are designed for tropical climates, delivering consistent performance even in extreme heat.

- **Heavy-Duty Cooling System**

An advanced cooling system prevents overheating, ensuring the engine and hydraulic components function optimally in high temperatures and heavy workloads.

- **Reinforced Seals & Insulation**

Enhanced rubber seals, weatherproof insulation, and corrosion-resistant coatings protect critical components from humidity, dust, and rain, reducing wear and tear over time.

With these built-in protections, HOWO-TX tippers are designed to last longer, require less maintenance, and operate efficiently, no matter the climate conditions. 





## Enhancing Service Quality with a Quality Sideloader

*Having added a HAMMAR Sideloader to the fleet, Cerah Abadi Logistik sees positive reactions from customers and improved bottom line.*

**H**AMMAR Sideloaders are gaining popularity with Transporters in East Malaysia. Recently, a number of units were shipped to Sabah, increasing the capacity of the specialist equipment to support local industries. The latest, proud, owner of one of the Swedish trailers is Cerah Abadi Logistik Sdn Bhd. Talking to Asian Trucker was Mr Wilson Hiew, Managing Consultant, Cerah Abadi Logistik Sdn Bhd, who has been impressed with the performance of his unit.

Incorporated in 1995 in Kota Kinabalu, Cerah Abadi Logistik started out offering cargo transport services. Gradually, container haulage services were added in the late 2010s. "It was my father that started this business. However, I have always been interested in transportation and logistics. It was a logical step for me to join the business," Hiew said. Furthermore, besides having a keen interest in the industry, his close friends work in related businesses, which further encouraged him to find his career in transportation.

Today, the operation depends on 35 trucks and 70 trailers. The latest addition, the HAMMAR Sideloader, is the first and only sideloader in the fleet. Having enhanced the fleet by moving away from re-built trucks, Hiew views this expansion as one way to grow the business. Hiew analysed the order volume and found that the existing skeleton trailers in the business would not be sufficient to handle the amount of containers Cerah Abadi Logistik handles. By his calculation, a HAMMAR Sideloader would be able to handle the equivalent of six standard trailers. "A worthwhile investment," as he calls it.

Previously, Cerah Abadi Logistik would depend on third-party suppliers of sideloaders. However, he found that unreliable providers had a negative impact on his brand name. Sometimes, he would wait for several days for a sideloader to be available to him. With the addition of their own Sideloader, this issue has been eliminated as they are now fully in control of the resource. This, in his estimations will improve efficiency by about five percent.

Considering the location and business environment Cerah Abadi Logistik finds itself in, dependency on spare parts being sent from Peninsular Malaysia was a consideration. In particular, Hiew evaluated

the aftersales service of HAMMAR and concluded that this supplier would be the best suited one. He said that "HAMMAR not only promises support, but they have a proven track record here with other customers of theirs."

While efforts are underway to enhance the road network in East Malaysia, transporters have to deal with less than perfect roads connecting major cities and business hubs. Therefore, Hiew had to take certain measures to adjust the operation. First, the driver assigned to the HAMMAR Sideloader is an experienced, older driver. He found that senior staff will take less risks, be less aggressive on the road. Secondly, he asked HAMMAR to modify the suspension of the trailer to use spring suspension instead of the standard air suspension. Especially heavy rain impacts the road conditions, turning driving on the oftentimes mountainous roads into a "Moonwalk".

In particular, Hiew praised the safety features build into the HAMMAR Sideloader. With the safety sensor, the operation can be carried out smooth and safe. This is also a reason why Hiew has allocated a senior driver is less likely to take risks, or take shortcuts. Hiew does not expect his driver to override the safety switch.

"Our customers have been delighted! Now they know that they can depend on Cerah Abadi Logistik for this kind of job," Hiew summarised. In particular, Cerah Abadi Logistik praised the quality of the unit. Evidently, there are no second-hand units available as they are being used for a long time. By the time any unit would become available, maintenance cost would make it prohibitively expensive to opt for a used unit. **T**





## Sin Hock Soon Group Signs MOU for 40 Scania Super

**S**in Hock Soon Group continues to strengthen its position in the logistics industry by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Scania for an additional 40 units of Scania Super. The signing ceremony, held at the company's new warehouse in Bukit Kayu Hitam, also included the official handover of three Scania Super trucks, part of the initial 10-unit purchase. These vehicles are part replacement of old trucks, part additional vehicles needed to cope with increased order volume. The total fleet size for the haulage division of Sin Hock Soon stands at over 200, of which some 80 Scania units have been acquired over the last few years.

As part of the event, Mr. Shawn Yew, General Manager of Sin Hock Soon Group, formally received the keys to the trucks from Mr. Gary Chin, Solution Sales Director for Trucks of Scania Southeast Asia, signifying the continued collaboration between both companies. "We understand that our customers' businesses depend on an optimal, seamless, and reliable logistics supply chain, and this is exactly what we strive to deliver. With the Scania Super trucks, we can provide exceptional service, as its robust 13-litre engine ensures maximum uptime while delivering an industry-leading 2,300Nm of torque at 900RPM, along with up to eight percent fuel savings," stated Yew.

The Scania Super sets a new industry benchmark with the highest torque at the lowest RPM, delivering unmatched performance. Engineered for excellence, it features dual camshafts, optimised injectors, precision turbocharging, and a state-of-the-art engine management system. For Sin Hock Soon Group, the Scania Super embodies power and reliability, ensuring every delivery meets the highest standards.

"I would like to congratulate Sin Hock Soon Group for being at the forefront of driving the shift towards a sustainable transport system. The Scania Super will continue to enhance profitability and sustainability for their business and customers. Additionally, safety remains a priority, as the Super now comes standard with Side Curtain Airbags and a Steering Wheel Airbag, alongside safety features like Electronic Brake System (EBS) with Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS) and Traction Control, to ensure the safety of their drivers and other road users," says Mr Gary Chin.

The selection process for new trucks is quite rigorous, according to Yew. On the outset, Sin Hock Soon prefers robust, less electronic-laden vehicles as they are better suited to the Malaysian market. Dependability is one of the main concerns as customers need to be serviced with certainty. "Scania's trucks have proven time and again that we can count on them. They are solidly built, with all the functions we require, but without added complexity that may make it more complicated to run them," Yew says. When asked about the choice being for Diesel-powered engines, he opined that the idea of electric trucks on principle is welcome. However, lack of charging infrastructure, high purchasing cost that cannot be recouped from clients and the fact that electricity is not





yet sustainably produced in the country have lead Sin Hock Soon to sticking with ICE for a while longer. Since the recycling of batteries from trucks has not yet addressed in a satisfactory manner, Yew and his team remain intrigued, but have yet to conclude that BEV are the better alternative.

Yew states that the consideration for the propulsion system is one that has been taking up a lot of time. While the company would like to push their ESG agenda further, this needs to be done in the right manner. For example, there is no point in promising a client that their routes will be served by an electric truck if that cannot be guaranteed. Overall, Yew says that the time for new powertrains will come, however, now may not be the right moment yet. Therefore, using the lasted engine technology, conforming with EURO V emission norms, is the best possible option for the time being. "We are aiming to reduce carbon emissions and our calculations indicate that this is currently the most effective way." When the parameters have changed and BEV will be more attuned to their ESG agenda, Sin Hock Soon will likely also make the switch.

Digital Services are essential for customers to maximise profitability. With the recent addition of Scania Super, Sin Hock Soon Group will gain access to a suite of Scania Digital Services, including a 3-Year Fleet Management System Control Package. Yew detailed that telematics, in conjunction with Scania's Ecolution has long been the backbone of managing their fleets, especially those bearing the Scania brand.



Fleet Management System Control Package provides valuable insights and information about their fleet. They can be accessed via My Scania portal and Fleet app including essential features such as real-time positioning, vehicle performance monitoring, environmental reporting to track CO2 emissions, service planning, defect reporting, and driver evaluation. These tools enable identification of opportunities for vehicle usage improvements during Driver Training and Coaching. With this partnership, Sin Hock Soon Group will seamlessly achieve both sustainability and profitability, all at their fingertips.

Scania Ecolution is now included as a standard feature with the purchase of Scania Super. It is a tailor-made partnership with the sole purpose of maximising our customers' fleet's fuel efficiency, reducing CO2, Nitrogen Oxide and Particulate Matter emissions, all to meet customers' ESG requirements.

With each Scania Super purchase, Sin Hock Soon Group receives a 2-Year Inclusive Maintenance plan covering up to 84 checkpoints. They also gain access to Scania's extensive workshop network, where expert service teams ensure maintenance is tailored to their evolving business needs.

Sin Hock Soon Group can also move forward and stay focus on what truly matters – growing their business and achieving higher profitability with the unmatched financial solutions from Scania's Financial Services.

Sin Hock Soon Group began its operations in the 1990s with a single truck transporting cargo within Peninsular Malaysia. Over the years, it has grown into the successful conglomerate it is today. With deep expertise in trucking and transportation logistics, the company continuously evolves through learning, improvement, and innovation to meet the changing needs of its customers. Its core services include cargo and tanker transportation, container haulage, warehousing and distribution, customs brokerage, freight forwarding, engineering, and leasing and support.

To supplement their services, a new warehouse was also constructed recently. This follows the company's direction of moving further towards offering customised solutions and logistics services. The new warehouse comes with enhanced facilities and improved safety measures to ensure high-value cargo would not be at risk. In connection with the warehouse opening, Yew also reflected positively on the move to consolidate business units in a new Headquarters, which was nearing completion just before the pandemic. With these strategic investments, Yew is confident that the business is well positioned for decades to come. **T**



# Pioneering Spirit: History of Chinese Trucks Thus Far

*Not just any industry veteran, but the one credited to having been the pioneer in Malaysia to bring in Chinese trucks, gives us his account of how things went down.*

**N**ow a familiar sight, Chinese truck brands might have had a rough start in Malaysia. Asian Trucker met up with the pioneer having gambled with his reputation, driving the idea of distributing Chinese trucks in Malaysia. We met Mr Loo Lian Khing, General Manager, Sino Truck Commercial Vehicle (M) Sdn Bhd, to learn about the history of Chinese trucks in Malaysia.

Rewinding some 15 to 20 years, the competitive landscape looked very different. According to Loo, it was a divide that, simplistically explained, was that the European truck brands had the haulier market cornered, and Japanese trucks were the vehicles of choice in the medium and light duty segment. Outside of that, the famous lori hantu, ghost trucks, would be used in construction sites.

It was in the late 2000s that Loo was approached by a business partner, who thought that Chinese trucks could have a lot of potential in Malaysia. For one, the ability to converse in Chinese is an advantage when dealing with Mainland China. As it turns out, it was China National Heavy Duty Truck Group (CNHTC), also known as Sinotruk, looking to expand their reach into Southeast Asia. CNHTC is a major Chinese state-owned heavy truck manufacturer headquartered in Jinan, Shandong Province, with subsidiaries including Sinotruk and CNHTC Jinan Special Truck Co Ltd. "I was sceptical at first. One thing I needed to do was to go to China and visit the factory if the project would go ahead to be reassured."

Although voices in the market said that Chinese trucks will not sell in Malaysia, Loo found that Sinotruk's Howo was based on an European truck in terms of technology and also looks. "So, I said to myself, when I looked at the specs of this truck, I looked at the truck and said, this looks familiar to transporters, hopefully, this will help." The Howo was the brainchild of the Chinese who sought technology transfer from Western truck makers and thus, Loo had a viable product on hand.

Having seen the vehicle and the factory, the next step then was not so easy. Actually, importing the vehicles was a tiring project. For one, he was working for Cycle & Carriage, who was also a dealer of Mercedes trucks. Asked to come up with a project paper, Loo had written a very long project paper. With all the risk attached, he understood that the project had to be trusted by the board, the board of directors, and also the principal from Germany.

Then, after a month after the project paper presentation, the project was green-lit. Then, my MD asked me to start an agreement in China to see the product. Loo said

that at that time, he was still not familiar with China. The perception was that the trucks were low tech. "So, I told my boss that it was better for us to go to China to see the factory ourselves, to reassure ourselves before we decide to start this new venture in Malaysia." Visiting the factory turned out to be an eye-opening experience: It was a huge factory, the size of a city. The size of an average village in Malaysia. What's more is the way Chinese doing business, according to Loo. The agreement was sealed within a week, over drinks, with a handshake.

Inside, the team was very surprised to see a high level of automation. Loo recounts that the most amazing finding





was that a lot of the components came from Europe. So, China has done already enhanced the product, sourcing components from Europe, not from Japan. When we visit Chinese factories today, they are actually European technology.

When Loo and his colleagues started importing the Howo, there was only Sinotruk. Compared to other trucks, the technology builds into the vehicle seemed to be very simple. However, this was used to the advantage of selling the first Chinese trucks in Malaysia. The philosophy was that there is a market when nobody else tries. Playing into the hands of the distributor was the fact that European truck became more and more expensive.

Opting for niche markets, the first models brought into Malaysia were cement mixers, rigid and prime mover trucks. Pitted against recon and rebuild trucks, these brand-new trucks were only slightly more expensive but had the advantage of being under warranty. "So, that was an interesting marketing strategy, and it was working out very quickly. Rigid and Cement Mixer are also very dominant in the market because they are the customers that use all the Recon trucks." Of course, Loo said, he still had to fight for every customer at first.


Similar to himself, transport owners did not have confidence in the new brand. A visit of three key customers to the factory however did the same convincing it did to Loo and his first orders for three times five units rolled in. One of his pioneer clients today have a fleet of over 1 000 trucks.

Initially, the team had to fight on several fronts. Sinotruk was not known as a brand and therefore not trusted. Adding to that, the trucks had some initial problems, creating a reputation of being unreliable. Drivers shunned the vehicles as they did not promise the same comfort as European vehicles. Although trucks being investment goods, no financial company wanted to lend money for the purchase of Chinese trucks. Loo recounts that banks even had a policy of not lending money to Chinese trucks. Not familiar with the process, Loo also had to figure out how to import the vehicles, going through official channels to obtain Vehicle Type Approvals and any other related certificate needed. As the authorities were unfamiliar with Chinese trucks, the process was also a little slower than it would have been for other countries of origin. Nowadays, as Chinese trucks are no longer a novelty, the approval process for any Chinese truck has also been streamlined. "I guess, someone had to make a start."

Feedback from the Malaysian market has also led to a rapid development of the vehicles. "There is no doubt that modern Chinese trucks are on par with the Europeans. Things have changed." What started with a total of 100 units per year sold has since grown into a significant business. By Loo's estimate, some 4 000 Chinese trucks are now sold annually, of which his company is selling the bulk. "Being the first in the market has paid off!" he quipped. Today, no less than 12 Chinese truck brands compete for the favour of customers.

The market has changed since: because more and more people accept Chinese trucks, the trust value increases, the acceptance value increases, and the most important thing is that Chinese trucks have changed a lot. The problems of the past no longer exist and the trucks now can do and make money. And of course, now, banks are coming after transporters to support loans.

The recipe for the success was a culmination of Loo's experiences. Emulated the concept of his previous company, he offered 24-hour service, maintenance contracts, buy-back guarantees. Admittedly, the spare parts situation has been one that plagued the first generations of Howos in Malaysia. What Loo has learned was that one has to adjust the way one works. "While there is a catalogue with exact details, this did not work as Chinese truck makers used to depend on several suppliers and part numbers could be mixed up. What one had to do was to send along a photo of the part needed."

Looking ahead, Chinese trucks are ready to address the challenges of today's road transport. With engines compliant with emission norms and high-tech, such as autonomous driving, these vehicles have long shed their image as being low-tech, test vehicles for a secondary market. Would Loo gamble again, if he could go back in time? "Yes, I would, but not today as I am no longer that young to deal with all the hectic we had back then," he jokes. 





# Let's Take this Off-Highway with Hengst



*Known for their On Highway applications, Hengst is confident to capture market share in Off Highway applications; being close to the market is an advantage they aim to utilise.*

Filtration has become a highly specialised field. To ensure that machinery and vehicles provide peak performance, filters need to be highly adapted to the environment that they are being used in. In this exclusive interview, Mr Jörg Weber, Off Highway Specialist at Hengst, addresses the issues concerning the off-highway segment offered by Hengst.

The first question that one would have is how Hengst defines this segment and how they understand the use of the filters. Weber explains it in as “everything which is not on road”. Therefore, it is construction machinery, but also agricultural equipment, marine equipment, assets used in forestry, generators and offshore equipment. “Essentially everything what is not dedicated to the road like a passenger car or truck. However, some trucks would be included in this category as the same vehicle could be used on highways, but also in a quarry for example.” As Hengst also provides filtration solutions for industrial applications, Weber explained that such solutions are yet again different from the ones defined as “off-highway” used in automotive for instance. An example of an industrial filter would be a unit used in a cement plant or in a cleanroom.

The creation of the category of Off-Highway (OHW) is a fairly new approach for Hengst. The rationale was developed a few years ago, conceptually aligned with the platform approach of many OEM engine manufacturers. For instance, an engine could be found in a truck, but also in an excavator; some combine harvesters share the engine with haulage trucks. “What we found is that we

haven't fully completed our product portfolio for the OHW aftermarket,” Webers say with a note to the size of the market. Since 2018, Hengst has been pushing this segment, seeing how certain customers use both types of assets.

As specific as the products is the role of distributors and dealers. Understanding the exact needs of the end user requires not only specialist knowledge, but also the ability to ensure timely supply of the filters. Hengst works exclusively with appointed partners, just as they do in any other segment, to harness the power of the business relationship with the customers. One thing that Hengst has learned is that a distributor of aftermarket parts could have an impressive coverage of filtration products with the Hengst brand when it comes to the On Highway applications. However, with a specialised Off Highway filtration dealer, there is a



small gap in the off-highway range that the German brand has to close. Weber estimates that the market for Hengst could be at least five to ten times bigger than what the company currently sells in this segment in the aftermarket.

The Off Highway market is a gigantic one. According to publicly available figures, it is a 38 billion EURO for agricultural equipment and another 36 billion for construction just for the aftermarket. Out of this global spare parts value, about three to four percent are filtration for each of the two segments each (depending on market).

Weber explained that the turn-over of parts is accelerated in these market segments. For certain machinery, filters will be changed weekly or even daily.

Besides that, there are oftentimes more units of filters used in Off Highway applications. This is due to the environment they operate in. Typically, Off Highway applications are run in extremely dusty or humid environments. They often run nonstop. Another aspect is the fact that these are often placed in remote locations where a breakdown would result in a drastic increase in downtime. "Nobody operating these machines would skimp on quality. Operators in such environments have learned that it is better to change filters more often to prevent breakdowns, then to stretch a dollar." Typically, in the Off Highway segment, the change intervals are measured in hours, not kilometres, with some filters needing to be changed every 100 hours of operating the machine. Thanks to the platform approach of the OEMs, Hengst have the filters already in their range, complete with the product code as it is used in multiple other applications.


Admittedly, Hengst is now in a challenger position whereby the brand competes with established players in the Off Highway market. "These kind of companies, they could be ahead because they have been working in the aftermarket business for these

segments, maybe 20 years or 25 years or even longer. So, we are a little bit like the in the hunter position," Weber said. However, he and his colleagues see a huge potential to grow either in Asia: globally it is maybe one of the segments in automotive with future growth potential. Given the nature of this business, being highly specialised, there are not many competitors and Hengst is confident that their name will be recognised.

One of the intricacies of this business is that fake or counterfeit products are hardly found. The prospect of having a mining operation shut down over the idea of saving a few cents is almost alien to the operators, who would insist on the original as they can rest assured that the parts will perform as advertised. Their business oftentimes depends on parts that, compared to the machine itself, does not cost a lot. In this context, it is noteworthy that one paradigm in manufacturing is to insource components. It is the basic "Make or Buy" decision, which in the case of filters is answered by the simple fact that filtration is also highly complex. For instance, Hengst alone employs more than 3 700 people, which indicates the resources needed to develop filters.

In Asia, Indonesia is the largest filtration market probably after India and China. This has been a deciding factor for Hengst when they opened the warehouse and the company in the country. Mining, logging and palm oil plantations are prime examples of potential customers, and all of these industries are booming in Indonesia. And this is where Hengst sees another growth opportunity through, being able to offer filtration for hydraulic applications. Especially on the construction and agriculture machineries, sometimes there are four or five hydraulic filters on the equipment.

Weber observed a mega trend that is also catching on in Off Highway applications: the rise of Chinese brands on the global stage. These China-brand construction will reach about 25 percent of the global machinery production in this segment in the near future. Pushing their way into global markets, Chinese brands have found willing buyers who deploy these Asian-made brands. Here, Weber appreciates that there are very few players, so having the ability to service a handful manufacturers is crucial. Being on the ground, with local production will become a must in his view as the potential is immense. While heavy machinery is more complex, it is here where the expertise of Hengst is needed in addressing the respective needs of each product.

Hengst is also well geared to increase the production depth for filtration solutions needed in Off Highway applications. Thanks to their award-winning foundry, Hengst is able to provide vehicle and machine manufacturers with filtration elements too. "We estimate about 1.1 million new construction machines are produced each year and we are talking about agriculture 2.2 million tractor units alone per year. There is a lot of potential for us in this area and we are confident that we can conquer market shares," Weber told Asian Trucker. Confidently saying this, he is asking those who want to give it a try to contact their nearest dealer to give their filters a try. "After all, if we are good enough for some brands to be their OEM partners, we should be well suited to be the provider of choice in the aftermarket too. Maybe we just haven't communicated this enough yet," Weber said in closing. 





# Goals Achieved, Okazoe Departs from Isuzu Malaysia

*Concluding his three-year stint in Malaysia, the outgoing CEO of Isuzu Malaysia hands over an enhanced service network, aligned with the vision of the company.*

**W**ith the market just about to recover from the pandemic, Shunsuke Okazoe, Chief Executive Officer, Isuzu Malaysia Sdn Bhd could not have arrived in Malaysia in a more challenging situation. This was in 2022 and now that he is heading back to Japan in March 2025 to take on his next challenge, Okazoe spoke to Asian Trucker in this exclusive interview about his achievements during his tenure.

Malaysia was described to him as a country with stable growth; the total industry volume was said to be around 600 000 units. After his tenure here, Okazoe believes that Malaysia still has not reached its full potential. "If we look at the last two years, there has been a record high exceeding 800 000 units. This is an indication that there is more potential." He also noticed that there have been a number of new entrants in the Malaysian market. This, he opined, seems to accelerate. Having worked in Malaysia for several years, he understands very well why the country is a good market for overseas expansions. He praised the business climate, the fact that English is widely spoken and that the workforce is very hard working and ambitious.

Speaking about insights into the working environment, the aspect of Malaysia being a multi-cultural environment is what has fascinated Okazoe the most. Hailing from Japan, he observes that there is a clear distinction between the two countries. Japan is a very homogenous culture with little influences from other cultures, whereas Malaysia is the opposite. "This has fascinated me as there are many different cultures here and we manage to work together in perfect harmony. In the work place as well as in our private lives." On that note, Okazoe already mentioned that he would miss a good Bak Kut Teh or Nasi Lemak when he is going back to Japan.

Setting out with specific goals, he evaluated his time as successful, having managed to complete all tasks set out. For instance, the number of units of the D-Max sold has significantly increased. According to him, the pick-up is best suited for small



businesses needing a nimble and dependable vehicle in this vehicle class. With the current vision of being the "Best value provider to our customers throughout the product lifecycle" in mind, it comes to no surprise that Isuzu, under his guidance, has significantly increased the number of service centres that were upgraded to Isuzu's latest Corporate Identity. "I am confident that my successor will



find that there is a solid foundation to continue this work.” At this point, he would like to thank all of Isuzu’s business partners and clients for their unwavering support and trust in the brand.

Having taken over the business at the end of the Pandemic, Okazoe reflected on the situation he found when he arrived. During the pandemic, trucks played a crucial role in keeping the economy going. Essential to businesses, small and large, commercial vehicles had to keep on running. This, in his view, was a great opportunity to demonstrate how a truck OEM can support their dealers and customers through tough times. This is where Isuzu shone, giving the brand the leverage needed to get through this unprecedented period of time.


Although the upgrade of service centres to Isuzu’s new Corporate Identity is progressing, Okazoe said that the brand still has a lot of work to do. With a growing vehicle population and the ambition to enhance uptime for customers, the focus should be on the aftersales service. Here, Okazoe thinks that maybe the network in Malaysia would still have untapped potential and that he would have liked to see more service centers being opened while he headed the brand.

Having dealt with the aftermath of the pandemic, now is the time to address the next challenges that are presenting themselves. For Malaysia, he sees two trends: more brands trying to enter the market and electrification of personal transportation. The former, while being a challenge is also an opportunity. “We do have the technology to compete with these new market players. This situation allows us to bring in more options.” However, while lacking charging infrastructure for trucks, he opined that for now, there is a good market for passenger cars using electric drive trains while the commercial vehicle segment will need to wait a little longer for its time to come. With the EV era is commencing in the Malaysian market, naturally Isuzu has also started the preparation to adapt to the EV market. But at the same time, Isuzu also continues the work in enhancing the ICE trucks and pickup trucks by improving the fuel efficiency and capability in reducing CO2 emissions. This ensures the availability of more practical and sustainable solutions for the Malaysia market as the industry transitions towards EV.

Isuzu has been the number one selling commercial vehicle brand in Malaysia. To continue being able to have this claim to fame was Okazoe’s biggest challenge. “How do you retain customers; how to make them keep coming back? These seem easy questions, but the answer is not easy.” To address this, Isuzu launched new models in the past three years, listening to the needs of the users. Having now

the title of best-selling brand under their belt for 11 consecutive years, Okazoe can surely claim that he rose up the challenge and made good on the promise made by the brand.

Having experience from working for Isuzu in other countries, Okazoe stated that it is interesting to see that the need of customers is essentially identical no matter where the brand operates. The product and service would be the same as requested in other markets, being dependable transport solutions and support. His time abroad will allow him to guide his new team, handling international sales, to better meet this need for the Malaysian market by providing different models of truck or options that would be enhancing the business of Isuzu’s Malaysian clients. Being it electric vehicles or specific options, Isuzu has to deliver the right product and Okazoe vowed to bring back his insights from Malaysia to ensure that this market will be receiving the best possible solution.

Although having visited many places in the country, Penang is close to his heart, having spent time with his family on a vacation. “I would like to see more of the country. Hopefully, I can visit again, as a holiday maker.” Concluding, he said that he would like to give a heartfelt thank you to the Malaysian customers and business partners as they have been the ones making it possible for him to strive during his time here. 





# Fixing Instrument Clusters

*A faulty instrument cluster is a safety concern first and foremost. Having it repaired has numerous benefits over replacing them right away.*

The instrument cluster is the command centre for any commercial vehicle. It is a critical component that provides the driver with real-time information on the vehicle's performance and efficiency, safety and productivity. All the information is presented in an easy, one-glance format using gauges, indicator lights and in some cases additional data to assist in vehicle maintenance routines. Should instruments fail to work properly, the driver may not be able to operate the vehicle any longer. Allegiance Malaysia is able to identify and repair issues with instrument clusters. Jason Soyza, Assistant GM-TE Division at Allegiance explains the process.

## Making Problems Visible

"Typically, gauges will fail or over a period become lose their accuracy. Another common problem is the failure of warning or indicator lights resulting in the driver not being aware of serious issues that may arise during a trip," he says. For commercial vehicles, these are serious issues that need to be handled accordingly.

A malfunctioning instrument cluster can, first and foremost, pose a serious safety issue. Further vehicle performance issues, and also compliance with regulations can be problems. In terms of safety, a malfunctioning air pressure gauge for example, would be a serious safety concern: the driver would not be aware if there is enough supply to the pneumatic brakes on the vehicle and trailer. Failure of indicators or gauges can also blindside a driver on serious issues on the vehicle. Engine performance and service intervals are communicated in the instrument cluster. Also, if the speedometer is not accurate or malfunctioning, the driver will not be aware if the vehicle has exceeded the legal speed limit. This could lead to hefty fines and regulatory problems with the authorities.

## Diagnosing Issues in Instrument Clusters

For instrument cluster we can directly connect the unit to our test bench simulator. We do not need the vehicle in this case as all the signals to the cluster can be

simulated and we are able to test the function and accuracy of gauges and indicators. As the input signals to the cluster are fixed and defined, compared to the physical result on the cluster, any variations from the expected will indicate a faulty or mis-calibrated instrument cluster.





Using a specialised simulator test bench, Allegiance is able to identify problems relatively quickly, in some cases within an hour. Depending on the outcome of the test, repairs or re-calibrations can be as fast as two to three hours for minor issues. Usually after testing, Soyza and his team can estimate the time it would take to fix the problem and inform the customer of time required and cost of repairs.

Once a problem has been noticed, it can be addressed. Fixing any problem in an instrument cluster would very much depend on the results of test simulations. In most cases, it would require disassembling the cluster to access the micro circuitry for individual component testing and replacement. Once completed, the cluster will be re-tested and calibrated to ensure its accuracy before re-assembly and another round of simulation testing to concluded it is working and accurate to specification.

Instrument clusters have become a key component in a commercial vehicle, even more so in the newer generation of vehicles. This means a vast majority of these components are now paired or serial-locked to vehicles. Replacing one will not only be costly but will have the added cost of having to program and serial lock-it back to the vehicle. "By identifying the problem, repairing and, or re-calibrating it's accuracy, we able




to reduce the cost of purchase for a new unit. Programming is not necessary as no changes are done to the internal software of the unit. In most cases this can amount to up to 50 percent savings from the cost of replacement and programming," Soyza explained

#### **A Practical Solution**

Unfortunately, when the cluster is removed from the vehicle it is not advisable for the vehicle to be driven as it would be a serious safety issue since important information would not be available to the driver. To get around this downtime, vehicle owners may utilise any older compatible clusters which are marked as faulty. Allegiance could repair those after evaluation. If the units are repairable, this gives the owner the option of having swing units available on standby. This way, they can replace the current faulty unit with it and reduce the downtime significantly. As an added bonus, this practice can avoid e-waste as the units will be given a second life.

The process sounds straightforward and easy to perform. "Can anyone do this? What is the equipment needed? Do you need training? It is not as simple as it sound. For starters, you need the testing equipment, which is costly and requires training." While it is relatively easy to remove a cluster from the vehicle, disassembly and repairs require specialised knowledge and training in the use of the equipment for testing and calibration. Calibration of a repaired unit is of utmost importance as an uncalibrated cluster will report the wrong information to the driver. This in turn can lead to some serious violations of safety regulations and compliance. Breaking speed limits and exceeding permissible emission outputs are the most obvious, and in a worst-case scenario accidents and injury may occur.

#### **Benefits of Repairing Instrument Clusters**

There are a few key benefits to repairing instrument clusters as opposed to swapping them for brand new units. The main benefit is in terms of cost, as in a lot of cases this can result in up to 50 percent cost savings. It has the added benefit of reducing electronic waste and it increases the lifespan of the component. Secondary to that, there is the benefit of reducing the downtime of the vehicle as sourcing for a new unit can take weeks and in some cases months and the vehicle cannot be used during this time. 





# Tyrexp0 Asia 2025 Gives Extra Milage

*Tyres are among the most important aspects of road transportation. Tyrexp0 Asia served as a platform to showcase the latest innovations and trends.*

at the show. Represented by Guillermo Blanco Martin, International Manager, the company once again demonstrated why it remains at the forefront of the industry. It was their third time to attend the show. In particular, trends identified by Blanco were repeatedly mentioned by other exhibitors.

## Company Focus

Founded in 1980, Neumáticos Andrés has spent over 45 years mastering the art of tyre distribution. With its headquarters in Salamanca, Spain, the company has grown into the leading tyre distributor in Spain and Portugal, and one of the top ten in Europe. Today, it is a thriving family business, now being led by the second generation, ensuring a legacy of dedication, expertise, and innovation.

Operating independently, Neumáticos Andrés boasts an impressive infrastructure, handling a total capacity of one million tyres while selling approximately 4.5 million units annually. Its vast reach extends to over 56 countries, with a primary focus on Europe. The company's commitment to quality and reliability is reflected in its extensive portfolio, which spans more than 70 brands. These include include premium manufacturers such as Michelin, Continental, and Bridgestone, as well as tier 2 and tier 3 brands, along with select imports from China, Thailand, and beyond.



**T**yreXpo Asia is the premier exhibition driving the tyres, automotive repair & maintenance, and tyre accessories industry forward. As Asia takes the lead in the global tyre market, with emerging economies like those in Southeast Asia fuelling demand and supply, this event serves as the ultimate platform to explore the latest trends and innovations. Between 12 to 14 March 2025, some 6 000 industry professionals converged on 250 exhibitors showcasing their brands in Singapore. The event played host to this vital gathering, ensuring unparalleled networking opportunities and access to top international and regional buyers.

The atmosphere at Tyre Expo 2025 in Singapore was charged with energy as industry leaders from around the globe gathered to explore the latest innovations in tyre distribution. Representative of the industry, Neumáticos Andrés, a name synonymous with excellence in the global tyre market, shared about their experience



"Exhibiting at Tyre Expo 2025 was a strategic move, aligning perfectly with the company's growth ambitions. Investing in international trade fairs is a key component of Neumáticos Andrés expansion strategy," Blanco told Asian Trucker. Such events provide invaluable opportunities to establish new client relationships while strengthening existing partnerships, according to him. The chance to engage in face-to-face discussions with clients and industry partners is an advantage that no digital interaction can replace. Having participated in three editions of Tyre Expo, and exhibiting for the second time with a dedicated booth, Neumáticos Andrés expressed immense satisfaction with both the performance of its team and the event's seamless organization.

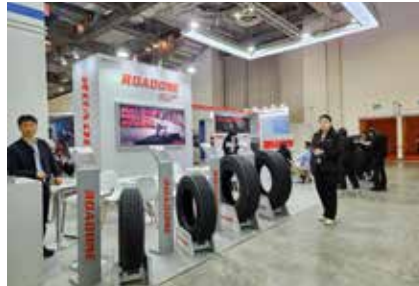
The company's clientele for commercial vehicle tyres typically consists of importers who require access to a broad portfolio of brands and sizes. Blanco elaborated, saying that "These clients seek a reliable partner capable of offering competitive pricing alongside superior service. Beyond pricing, factors such as quality assurance, regulatory compliance, logistics, and flexible payment options play a crucial role in the decision-making process." This, as many at the show would echo, is a current trend in the industry. Neumáticos Andrés, with over 250 employees and a dedicated international department of more than 20 professionals, ensures that every client receives top-tier support. The company prides itself on being more than just a supplier—it is a trusted partner that adds value at every step of the supply chain.

As the global tyre industry evolves, Neumáticos Andrés closely monitors emerging trends to stay ahead of the curve. One of the most pressing challenges today is the impact of logistics on the supply chain. Ensuring consistent availability of stock while maintaining efficiency has become a critical aspect of business strategy. The company's direct relationships with manufacturers provide a crucial advantage, allowing it to anticipate market shifts and adapt accordingly. While premium brands follow distinct strategies, there is significant room for growth in the medium and budget segments. Across all tiers, manufacturers continue to push the boundaries of performance and safety, with cutting-edge technology driving innovation.

### Tyre Mega-trend


Among the most talked-about topics at the expo was the rise of electric vehicles (EVs) and the implications for the tyre industry. While all major manufacturers are exploring strategies to cater to this growing market, the long-term leader in this segment is yet to be determined. The industry is at the cusp of a transformation, and many tyre manufacturers are keenly observing developments to ensure it remains at the forefront of this evolution.

EV tires are different from regular tires because EVs have heavier batteries, require tires with strong constructions and robust rubber compounds for the extra weight and instant torque, and need to minimize rolling resistance to maximize range.



Hailing from Penang, Malaysia, Advance Tyre Automart (PG) Sdn Bhd was also participating as an exhibitor. One of the highlights on their stand was a nano-chemical technology that acts as a tyre sealant in case of punctures. "This technical advancement provides enhanced durability and protection," said Elian Chong, Sales and Business Development Manager. Using a simple fulcrum and lever, visitors could poke a nail into an inflated tyre to demonstrate how their sealant works. This self-sealing technology is promoted by Advance Tyre Automat as a game-changer for safety and convenience. While currently available for passenger cars, the potential for adaptation to commercial vehicles remains open for further exploration.

With the rise of EVs, the industry is evolving rapidly. The increasing weight of these vehicles has driven demand for specialised tyres incorporating sponge technology, ensuring optimal performance and safety.

The exhibition itself was exceeding expectations according to the organiser. Notably, the perception of tyres has seen a transformation from a mere necessity to a money-making asset. The strong presence of both Chinese and European brands highlighted the strategic balance between affordability and high-end quality. 





# AMR 2025 Celebrates Road Transport

*The 73<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Auto Maintenance & Repair Exhibition featured innovative technology for road transportation as focal point.*



**People:** With increasing vehicle ownership, there is a growing emphasis on safe driving. The zone will feature advanced driving simulators, which enhance training effectiveness while reducing costs for driving schools. In particular, the latest driving simulator of Sanlian Traffic aims to enhance students' ability to handle complex traffic scenarios and strengthen their safe driving awareness through personalised



**H**eld at the International Exhibition & Convention Centre (CIECC) in Beijing, the Auto Maintenance & Repair Exhibition (AMR 2025) from 31 March to 2 April 2025, the show saw increased demand from exhibitors. During the event, 1186 exhibitors showcased their products and solutions; over the course of the event, 39 fringe events rounded out the programme.

The newly launched Road Transportation Equipment Zone at (AMR 2025) was to be a highlight of the exhibition, focusing on the major themes of people, vehicles, and goods. This zone showcased key technologies and equipment in road transportation safety in the era of intelligent driving.





training programs and a highly simulated environment. Meanwhile, the Safety Driving and Intelligent Transportation Trends Forum will also present new educational materials and industry standards to elevate driving safety.

**Vehicles:** As the importance of electric vehicles (EVs) rises, so does the focus on their safety and maintenance. This area will highlight cutting-edge EV diagnostics and monitoring technologies, including battery testing solutions from leading industry authorities, ensuring vehicle safety and reliability. China Automotive Engineering Research Institute exhibited its new energy vehicle inspection solution, which includes power battery inspection technology and vehicle condition monitoring solutions. This helps vehicle owners and maintenance terminals to keep track of the vehicle's condition in real-time.

**Goods:** The zone will address the pressing issues of logistics safety and efficiency by showcasing innovative cargo securing equipment. Zhejiang Shuangyou, a leading manufacturer, presented new solutions that minimise cargo movement and prevent damage during transit, enhancing overall safety for drivers and road users. The exhibitor also launched a digital education and training platform to assist in the safety training in the logistics transportation industry.

An immediate attention seeker is the B-Double trailer presented by Shandong Luoxiang Automobile Manufacturing Co., Ltd. This innovative design is to be used in haulage operations and is capable of taking on two forty-foot

containers or a combination of forty- and twenty-foot containers. The trailer has been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport. AMR 2025 served as the launchpad for the trailer, which has recently received approval and is now entering series production. The company, located in Shandong, hopes that this design will become a popular option among transporters. It was learned that the company also exports to markets outside China, using different brands. With a workforce of about 3 000 staff, the company boasts significant production capacity.

In response to the new policy, GB7258, the company has independently developed a heavy vehicle safety system, including multiple core technologies. These include super disc brakes, anti-overturning suspension, iCAS intelligent control system, and heavy vehicle axles, which are the technological pinnacle in the trailer industry according to a spokesperson at the show.


A highlight from the fringe programme was a competition where the best mechanics from across the country showed off their panel working skills. Using Ga-Cloud tools, the contestants had to restore sheet metals that had been prepared to simulate bend and dented panels from motor vehicles. The competition could be heard from far, with contestants being highly concentrated while hammering out the dents in their panels. As part of the competition, a paint booth was set up for painters to show off their skills of re-painting panels.

Another booth that invited for a longer visit was the array of driving simulators from Eastern Pioneer Virtual Reality Technology Application Co Ltd. Utilising virtual reality, the simulators are used to train drivers of cars, buses and trucks. Various versions were on hand, with some aimed at training those that have not yet passed their driving licence. Other set-ups were to train drivers on specific situations, such as hazardous conditions. Sheng Zeng, Vice Manager, told Asian Trucker that the units could also be configured for use in other countries. The final cost for each unit depends on the specifications as per client's needs and will be provided upon request.

Those looking to extending their oil-drain intervals were well advised to visit the booth of Hebei Shengqi Lubricating Oil



Technology Co Ltd. Among their various offerings, specialist lubricants, they highlighted oils that could be used for up to 80 000 and 100 000 kilometres in commercial vehicle engines.

Delegates visiting the event praised the organisers for their decision to move the show to the new halls of the exhibition centre. Many commented on the good range of exhibitors showing high quality products, making the show a treasure trove for those sourcing new suppliers for tools, parts and technology related to automotive maintenance and repairs. The next AMR has been announced to be held in spring 2026. Organisers hope to further increase the number of participants. 





# AI, Your On-board Safety Officer

*Building on their experience with sophisticated telematics solutions, NEX added an AI-based driver safety system.*

In their pursuit of reducing accidents, NEX is taking the next step by deploying AI-based cameras in their trucks. As part of their fleet, and driver management, this technology has already proven to be effective, although only deployed for a short period of time. Speaking to Asian Trucker was Billy Tee, Director, NX Transport Service (M) Sdn Bhd, to elaborate on what the philosophy is behind the installation of the system and how it would contribute positively to the business.

## What's the Problem?

Any time an accident happens a transport business is severely impacted in different ways. For instance, as the livery will tell anyone who the owner of a truck is, the brand's image may suffer. Furthermore, insurance premiums will increase. Injuries or even fatalities affect not only the employer, but also families and society in general. A number of behaviours have been linked to increased risks on the road; speeding, fatigue and distractions are common causes for accidents. "We have a fairly sophisticated driver management system in place, as well as telematics to monitor our fleets. However, we were still dealing with a number of accidents each month. Although the occurrences were already few, we felt that we can improve," Tee said.

## Added Layer of Safety

The answer to the question came in the form of AI-based camera systems. Comprising of three cameras, a panic button, intercom and GPS capabilities, the system NX Transport Service opted for originates from a security camera system. Not being able to find a suitable system being readily available, Tee and his team turned to a local provider with experience in surveillance technology to customise their solutions to meet the needs of a transporter.

Each of the trucks, from prime mover to vans, is now equipped with the hardware to monitor the behaviour of the drivers. At the heart of the application lies a list of situations that could potentially lead to an accident, ranked by the urgency to intervene. Depending on the classification of the occurrence, the team in the control room will intervene. "We started the project less than a year ago. We have

been able to swiftly instal the system, work out all the kinks and have it fully deployed within just three months." One of the issues that requires attention is the elimination of false alarms, which will be done in the first weeks of use.

## How it works

Cameras pointing at the driver and the space ahead of the truck will detect situations that can potentially lead to an accident. One such situation could be a towel hung in the window to block the sun. While that provides some shade, it also obstructs the view. "The most common issue we detect is fatigue. When drivers become sleepy, they start to yawn, then they nod off, having microsleep episodes," Tee explained. When a driver starts to yawn, now the AI detects this and gives an alert to the command centre. Distraction can also lead to accidents. Facial recognition software within the AI detects when a driver is not focused on driving, for example when making phone calls or just looking around. Tee explains that "We are humans, and we are sometimes not at our best in terms of physical fitness. There is no problem with that, as long as we address this properly." Drivers at NX Transport Service have to take a half hour break every three hours, which is less driving time than legally mandated before a



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stop has to be made. The new AI system would record any such breaks. Should the break be less than 30 minutes, it will not be recorded as such, forcing the driver to fully extend to the minimum of half an hour.

### Driver Perspective

According to Tee, drivers initially were sceptical. However, as Tee explains, drivers have come to understand that this new system is not to monitor them, but to enhance their safety. "Nobody wants to get involved in an accident. It helps nobody if a truck is getting involved in an accident." Currently, the operators in the control room record up to 3 000 incidents per month to be investigated. Depending on the severity of the issue, incidents may have only a 24-hour period to be investigated and corrective measures to be taken. Within four hours the local HQ will be notified, after 12 hours the regional HQ will get their reports. Swift action to contain any dangerous situation is paramount.

"Every morning, we go through these instances to identify issues, risky behaviours and ways to coach our drivers." Tee can now confirm that the truckers have come to appreciate the system as it is for their benefit. Discussions are on-going about the addition of more cameras to the system to enhance the system even further.

### How Much?

With the hardware and dashboard for the operators the initial cost can easily run up a million Ringgit. Admittedly, Tee said that this is a very high cost. However, the implementation of this AI tool was not motivated by the ambition to increase profits, but to make a statement about the safety of their operation. Many drivers have been with the company for many years, simply because the work environment is as such that the management is extremely concerned about the wellbeing of staff and the protection of other participants in traffic.

Extrapolating from the short period of time that the system has been active, the estimated reduction of accidents currently runs at 90 percent. In other words, it is projected that the number of accidents NX Transport Service's trucks are involved in per year is that of a monthly number prior to the system's installation.

"Again, this is not about money. It is about safety. We will continue to seek better solutions on how to make road transportation safer and we hope that others will follow this example by using such tools," Tee said in conclusion.



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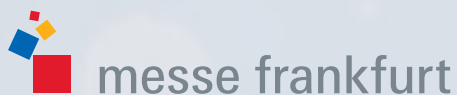
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# Hong Seng's Year of Celebrating Milestones

The annual dinner held in Setia City Convention Centre in January marked the first of many events that Hong Seng Group will mark as milestones once the year ended. The group has a lot on its plate as it is a special year, whereby the business is celebrating its 60th anniversary. Asian Trucker met with the man behind the stellar success of the group, Dato' Seri Teoh Hai Hin, who provided insights into how he and his team managed to grow the brand from a surprising origin.

The year 1965 marks the origin of the brand when Teoh's father set up a small business, as a mechanic, to repair small engines used in fishing boats. Expanding from there, the focus shifted to larger engines, until the service covered six cylinder engines used in marine applications. When in 1972, his dad passed away, the business continued to operate under the stewardship of Teoh's mother. "Today, I have been working for 47 years, having joined our family business in 1979", Teoh told Asian Trucker.

From their venture of servicing marine engines, Teoh expanded to road transport, initially repairing trucks while also selling re-conditioned trucks. "This was the mainstay of the business from 1980 to about 2010, when we looked at importing

new trucks. Our goal was to diversify, to add sales streams." With two Chinese brands as their first vehicles to be sold, the business has since expanded beyond the state-border. Headquartered in Butterworth, Hong Seng now has a service network covering Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Kuantan, Johor as well as Sabah and Sarawak.

The decision to become a distributor of Chinese trucks was motivated by the market conditions at the time. In the 2000s and 2010s, Continental trucks dominated in the haulage segment while Japanese brands had the light and medium duty truck customers conquered. "We wanted to offer new trucks, and the Chinese brands were available to us. Becoming successful with Japanese or Continental trucks did not seem possible to us and hence we opted for these China-made vehicles." Steeped in experience in the market, the decision was an obvious one.

However, when the first trucks were sold to Malaysian customers, Teoh had to find out that these vehicles were not without their fair share of issues. The quality was something that had a lot to desire for. "That is very interesting and very challenging. It's very challenging because the China products at that time, the quality was not so good,"







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Teoh recalled. In addition, the spare parts supply was another area that needed improvement. Today, Teoh confidently said, these issues have been overcome, and the vehicles themselves are on par with their European brethren, whereby customers no longer have to worry about after sales service and maintenance.

The change in attitude towards Chinese trucks has also been one of the most memorable events in the long history Hong Seng has in the market. Although this was a gradual, slow process, Teoh said that it was the period of time that he remembers the most as the gamble of engaging with Chinese OEMs paid off. What is remarkable, in his view, is that customers are now turning to new Chinese trucks instead of considering re-conditioned or re-built Continental trucks. The reasoning is that a new truck would come with warranty, which re-built trucks are lacking. "Considering that the price difference is not that much anymore, one would surely be better off with a new truck that comes with warranty. Re-built trucks are, after all, used vehicles where there is a lot of potential for breakdowns because of them being several years old."

Teoh hopes to be able to further grow the brand as he is confident in saying that he hasn't reached the limit of what is possible yet. This, evidentially, is why the group has been offering construction machinery for some time now. At the recent event in Setia Alam, the latest excavators available from Hong Seng were presented to a large audience.


Hong Seng's customers would be in industries where they need both. Most of Teoh's customers, especially construction customers, and contractors would require both types of vehicles. Supplementing on- and off-road trucks, they oftentimes require bulldozers, excavators and other machinery. With such a portfolio, Hong Seng is now able to provide a one-stop-shop solution whereby customers can rely on them to have the entire spectrum of vehicles needed covered.

Looking at future growth potential, Teoh is firm on adding more trucks to the line-up. In particular, light duty trucks with electric powertrains are of interest to him as these should become very popular in the near future. Mini trucks, using battery electric powertrains, are among the highlights of what he plans to offer the market soon. However, buses are ruled out as they are a different kind of vehicle that, in his view, would not fit the expertise and direction of the company.

Observing market trends, Teoh has found that transporters are yet to give the electric prime movers a try. This, as many others have opined, is due to the lack of charging infrastructure. Not dismissing the usefulness or the technical advancements, he said that at the moment the trucks are not practical to use as the distances his customers have to cover are too big to make electric trucks feasible.

In line with the company's ambition to further grow the service network, Teoh also noticed that service has become a much more important offering in the commercial vehicle market. Without a well-established service network, nobody would consider buying any brand of trucks as uptime is of utmost importance. Circling back to the comment about how Chinese trucks have improved, he also pointed out that many China trucks nowadays come with warranties that can span up to five years. Certainly, this would be a big vote of confidence in their products, Teoh said.

Having seen the growth of the Chinese truck brands in Malaysia, Teoh said that it may soon be a case whereby the oriental brands will dominate, surpassing the Continental brands. Although his range is limited and other Chinese brands have since entered the market, he is observing that all of his competitor brands have also improved in terms of quality and perception. "What we are offering is what our clients need. There is no point trying to push them to opt for a brand or vehicle that does not meet their requirements, just to make a quick buck." This philosophy, so he said, has served him well throughout the years and he would not deviate from that now.

Although having been in the business for almost five decades, Teoh does not stop to learn. To do so, he oftentimes travels along with his colleagues to find out what is happening on the ground. This allows him to plan ahead, to strategize. "Nowadays, I am mostly busy with planning and guiding the business. I am celebrating these big wins with my colleagues and I am hoping to be seeing more of our service centres being opened this year. All these would be small celebrations with in this year, which is a very important one for us as we celebrate 60 years." 





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