



Indian trucks

New Zealand's transport future?

BY SANGEETA ANAND

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With fuel prices at the top end of the dial, the trucking industry is continuously aware of the need to slim down its costs while meeting its environmental responsibilities. This comes as low international trade barriers are putting pressure on margins.

Smaller operators, particularly, will be more likely to settle for trucks that fulfill their needs without the bells, whistles and robustness of larger, more established brands.

Just as China is fulfilling similar roles in other industries, it is likely that Asia will be expanding its market in trucks that are available at low capital cost, are aesthetically designed and low on fuel and maintenance costs.

Such a brand is Tata, an Asian manufacturer that also produced India's first airliner, first steel plant and first technical education institute.

Lately, the brand launched what it claimed to be the world's cheapest car – the Nano, for NZ\$3300, by Tata Motors Ltd, the vehicle manufactur-

ing unit of global conglomerate Tata.

Tata Motors is India's largest and the world's fifth largest commercial vehicle manufacturer and the world's fourth largest truck manufacturer. Tata exported its first truck in 1951 and now has trucks on the roads of Europe, South America, Africa, the Middle East, Australia and Asia. It has franchisee or joint venture assembly operations in Malaysia, Kenya, Bangladesh, Ukraine, Russia and Senegal.

Debasis Ray, head of corporate communications, Tata Motors says Tata's latest ute, the Xenon, has been tested in tough Australian conditions. "The Xenon has already covered 100,000 kms in the Australian conditions, in highway and outback applications, and the results are quite encouraging."

Fiat assembles Xenon in Cordoba, Argentina and sells it under its brand name in Brazil and Argentina. The Xenon has been launched in two variants, in single and double cab configurations, in South Africa. These models could appeal to New Zealand buyers.

The Xenon delivers clean emissions which are compliant with Euro-IV regulations. Tata Motors

The New Zealand Transport Agency has searched their registration files and inform us that 67 Tatas were registered in NZ at the end of July 2008. Only one appears to be a truck, the Tata model 1210D has a GVM of 11,700 kilograms.

| Model | Current registrations |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1210D truck | 1 |
| 608 buses | 6 |
| Safari 4x4 | 1 |
| Telcoline utes | 59 |



was the first Indian company to introduce vehicles that met these standards, well ahead of the stipulated dates.

In 2004, Tata acquired Daewoo Commercial Vehicles, South Korea's second-largest truck maker. The renamed Tata Daewoo Commercial Vehicles Company has launched several new products in the Korean market, and exported to several international markets. Two-thirds of South Korea's heavy commercial vehicle exports are by Tata Daewoo.

In 2005, Tata Motors acquired a 21 percent stake in Hispano Carrocera, a Spanish bus and coach manufacturer.

The following year, Tata Motors formed a joint venture with Brazil-based Marcopolo, which builds bodies for buses and coaches. The joint venture completed the buses and coaches for India and international markets.

In the same year, Tata Motors entered into a joint venture with Thailand's Thonburi Automotive Assembly Plant Company to build and market the company's pick-up vehicles there.

Debasis Ray says the company puts strong emphasis on research to meet changing customer demands. It employs more than 2500 scientists and engineers at its 42-year old Engineering Research Centre.

Despite being based in a developing country, the company recognises the importance of environmental sustainability, including the development of engine technologies that use alternative fuels. In 1992, Tata Motors formed a joint

venture with America's Cummins to introduce emission control technology in India.

Despite stiff competition to Tata trucks from the European, American, Japanese and British models, it has secured a niche in the world market. It aims to expand this role by delivering on performance, safety, environment and, most importantly, price. Tata trucks are equipped to operate in the stringent weather and road conditions of New Zealand and Australia. □

Tata specifications

| Model | LPT 2515 (4x2) | LPT 2516 (6x2) | 1613 (4x2) |
|-----------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| GVM | 25,000 kg | 25,000 kg | 16,200 kg |
| GCM | Not listed | Not listed | Not listed |
| Engine | Cummins 6BT | Cummins 6BT | Cummins B180 |
| Power | 100kW (137hp) | 112kW (152hp) | 132kW (177hp) |
| Torque | 490Nm at 1400-1700 rpm | 540Nm at 1400-1700 rpm | 650Nm at 1500 rpm |
| Brakes | Dual circuit, full air S cam | Dual circuit, full air S cam | Dual circuit, full air S cam |
| Auxiliary brake | Exhaust | Exhaust | Not listed |
| Tyre size | 10.00x20 16 ply | 10.00x20 16 ply | 10.00x20 16 ply |
| Gearbox | Tata GBS50 five-speed | Tata GBS50 five-speed | Tata G600 six-speed |
| Wheelbase | 4880mm | 4880mm | 3580mm |

New Zealand Trucking says

This table shows the basic specs for three Tata models as listed on the internet. The listings do not clearly include emission standards, however one engine was listed as meeting Euro2.

The specifications indicate that Tata trucks are not up to the standards expected or legally required in New Zealand. However, we expect Tata to improve their standards and produce a truck that will appeal to some of our market within a few years.