



busworld india

A GREAT SUCCESS

Busworld India was held in the Bombay Convention & Exhibition Centre in Mumbai from 1 to 3 February. Busworld International and its partners in India, Inter Ads Limited, were delighted with the quality of the exhibitors, visitors and conferences. Busworld India proved to be a major success and a very important step forward for Busworld and its unique brand of international events that are dedicated to the bus and coach industry.

Busworld India was inaugurated by Hon Jeevanrao Gore, Chairman, Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation in the distinguished presence of Shri. Manjunatha Prasad, Managing Director, Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation, Shri. Subash Goyal, President of the Indian Association of Tour Operators, Shri. P Ananda Rao, Executive Director of the Association of Road Transport Undertakings, Mr D P Saste, Head (Safety & Homologation), Central Institute of Road Transport, and many other important policy and decision makers.

India, by a long way, is the second largest market in the world for buses and coaches. It looks to Europe for inspiration on vehicle design, performance, safety and regulations.

It was therefore logical for Busworld India to follow the well-established tradition of Busworld Kortrijk in hosting not only an exhibition,

but also parallel conferences on the most important issues faced by the Indian industry and in the wider global market.

India is becoming an increasingly important exporter of buses and coaches, including assembly operations in several other countries.

The strong domestic economy and the ever-increasing expansion of the road network, both highways and local roads, has raised demand for buses and coaches. Busworld India was a "selling" exhibition. While many people came to look at the latest products, others came to



buy. That was especially true for the Automobile Corporation of Goa Ltd. They sold all seven coaches that were on their stand and a ceremony was organised for the official hand over of the keys to each buyer.

Even in the long, colourful and successful history of Busworld, that was probably unprecedented. Many orders have been taken in the past, and many vehicles have been exhibited in customers' colours, but has there ever been a previous Busworld where so many vehicles have been sold off the stand by one exhibitor during the course of the exhibition?

Mieke Glorieux, Director of Busworld Kortrijk, quipped: "That is a challenge for everyone coming to Kortrijk later this year, whether exhibitors or customers!"

Busworld International is totally focussed on its vision of improving the bus and coach industry throughout the world. During previous Busworld India exhibitions, parallel conferences have been held. From the very edition of Busworld India, held in New Delhi in 2005, they have attracted high quality speakers and audiences. They have gained a reputation for being informative on a wide range of important

topics and are well supported by many of the leading personalities in the Indian bus and coach industry.

Each of the three conferences dealt with important and current issues in the Indian industry, with presentations given by Indian and international experts. One concentrated on sustainable modern bus and coach mobility in India. A second conference was dedicated to the safety of school going children, looking at issues like fire safety and finding solutions for bus and coach accidents.

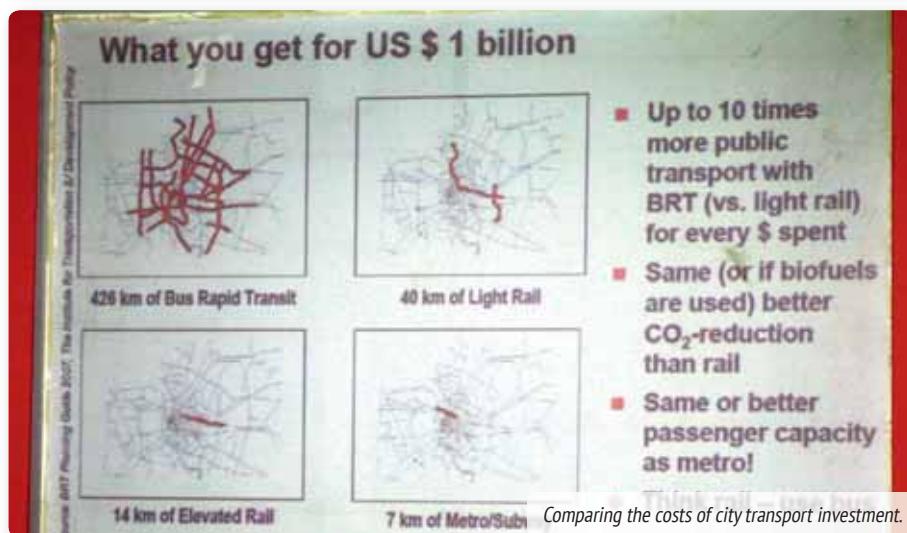
The final session was chaired by Mr S K Lohia, Joint Secretary, and Officer on Special Duty, Ministry of Urban Development of the Government of India. He was the architect of the popular and important initiative called the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission under which stimulus funds were made available by the Central Government to provide 15,000 buses for service in 68 cities throughout India.

The vehicles had to be built to high specifications, including one or two step entry, passenger information systems, destination equipment and GPS. An extension of the JNNURM stimulus could provide funding for up to a further 18,000 city buses!

It is rare for Indian audiences to get access to an official as senior as Mr Lohia, but it was greatly appreciated. It was seen as a turning point in the Indian bus and coach industry, and so was Busworld India.



The visit of Mr S K Lohia (centre) was most welcome.



MG GROUP

At Busworld India, the MG Group, a new holding company for bus bodybuilder, MG Automotive Ltd, announced that it had established a new subsidiary company called MG Grey Engine LLP.

The new subsidiary is based in Bangalore and is developing and manufacturing electronic components for the automotive industry. A number of new products were launched at Busworld India in a live display inside a city bus body built by MG Automotive.

MG Grey Engine will offer products like infotainment, lighting, navigation and intelligent transport systems. They will also offer LED destination boards, GPS data recording, surveillance systems, electronic control units, power inverters and touch-sensitive switches and panels. Production was scheduled to commence shortly after Busworld India close.



The Busworld International team visited every stand.



There are still many old buses in use.

BUS CODE DEADLINE FIXED

At the inaugural Busworld India, held in New Delhi in March 2005, Mr Balraj Bhanot, at that time Director of the Automotive Research Association of India, expressed concern about the poor quality of many bus and coach bodies in India and their unwelcome contribution to the country's high accident rates.

He announced a new Bus Code to introduce regulations on the construction of vehicles. It was broadly based on the European Bus Directive (EC/2001/85). Secondly, ARAI would introduce a system for accreditation of body-builders including new requirements for Conformity of Production. It was a fundamental

change in legislation, and a major challenge to the manufacturing industry.

Mr Bhanot later retired from ARAI but continues to be active as a management consultant and Chairman of the Vehicle Inspection & Certification Regime India Committee. He has regularly contributed to Busworld conferences.

There have been many delays in introducing both the Bus Code and Conformity of Production, but the main manufacturers had prepared for it, including, in some cases, the acquisition of compliant European technology.

For a variety of reasons, there were a number of delays in introducing and approving the testing agencies which are now responsible for accrediting bus bodybuilders under the terms of the Central Motor Vehicles (Accreditation of Bus Body Builders) Order 2007.

Under the Order, bus bodybuilders were categorised on the basis of their activities, includ-

ing the capability to manufacture complete vehicles, either integral or body on chassis, based on their own designs and drawings, also those building bus bodies to their own designs or to the designs of any third party, including customers.

At Busworld India, Mr Bhanot said that body-builders who wished to continue building and selling their products had to be accredited by a deadline of 31 March 2013. Designs now have to meet the Bus Code and builders had to show and obtain type approval certificates by October 2013. That is effectively the second stage in the process.

The third and final stage is the Conformity of Production that requires inspectors from the licensing authorities to visit factories to ensure that vehicles are in fact being built to those approved standards.

It is mandatory for a manufacturing facility to have at least 1,000sq m covered workplace to accommodate at least one bus to carry out bodybuilding. It should also ensure protection against corrosion and should have adequate water shower facilities to check for any leakages.

Product quality should be ensured by having controls on raw material quality, production procedures and final product inspection to the required standards. Bodybuilders will be required to have adequate technical manpower with knowledge and experience of building bus bodywork, as well as the safety requirements stipulated in the Bus Code.

These new regulations have been a long time in planning and it will take at least a decade for all the older, non-compliant, buses and coaches to be taken out of circulation. Nevertheless, it is a major advance for the Indian industry and road safety standards.



The ARAI stand at Busworld India.



busworld kortrijk

SOLD OUT

The team at Busworld is already very busy working on the next edition of Busworld Kortrijk, to be held from 18 to 23 October. It is a measure of the popularity of this most international exhibition that all the floor space has been sold and there is even a waiting list of companies that are very keen to participate.

As the only organiser of international exhibitions and conferences focused exclusively on the bus and coach industry, Busworld follows the international markets very closely.

Mieke Glorieux, Director of Busworld Kortrijk, said: "We are greatly encouraged by the strength of support from exhibitors for Busworld Kortrijk. It is a clear sign that the industry is vibrant and has an excellent future." "We follow all the markets closely, particularly Western Europe (consisting of 15 countries plus Norway and Switzerland) very closely. Despite the regular drip-drip of adverse economic news, registrations of buses and coaches, above 8.0 tonnes gross, in those markets, fell from around 23,570 units in 2011 to 21,480 in 2012."

"That is a fall of less than 9%. It is not dramatic. When we analyse the figures more closely, there have been sharp falls in countries like Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain. On the other hand, sales in Northern Europe have held up remarkably well. There is still strong pressure to renew city bus fleets with vehicles that are fully accessible, and to remove older and much more polluting buses from urban centres."

"The interurban and express coach sectors have also held up well. Indeed, there has been further expansion of express coach services that offer excellent value for money compared with trains and airlines. With the rising cost of fuel, that trend is likely to continue. The main weakness is in the luxury coach sector, where the customers are often smaller, family-owned, companies. Many of them rely on bank finance to acquire new vehicles and are finding that borrowing terms are less favourable than before the financial crisis."

"Every cloud has a silver lining. If companies are obliged to keep vehicles for a longer life, they will require more replacement parts, and services like refurbishment. Some of our exhibitors at Busworld Kortrijk are well aware of these opportunities."

"Our focus at Busworld is not just on Western Europe. We are actively involved in China, India, Russia and Turkey and have plans to take our unique Busworld brand to Latin Amer-

ica. The Chinese and Indian markets rely very heavily on buses and coaches, because there are still very low levels of car ownership."

In Russia, the Government is encouraging major renewal of bus fleets. In Moscow alone, more than 2,000 new city buses will be delivered in the coming months. Added to that, Scania recently announced an order for more than 700 chassis, to be bodied in Russia, for initial service at the Winter Olympics in Sochi, followed by service in the Moscow Region.

"Turkey, another market which we know well, is investing heavily in new city buses. The authorities realise that congestion, caused principally by cars, cannot continue to strangle cities. Turkish manufacturers, who regularly support Busworld Kortrijk, have benefitted greatly. Otokar alone has secured three contracts, each for 250 city buses to Istanbul.

"In South America, Bus Rapid Transit has taken off in a very large way in several major cities. European manufacturers have led the way by supplying vehicles from their factories in Brazil. Busworld intends to take its brand to Latin America and there will be more information about this in a future Newsletter."

"Busworld Kortrijk will include a number of regular events. As in previous years, we will

host the handover of the prize of the "International Coach of the Year", this time for 2014. There will be the European Coach Week held before Busworld, where we put the latest coaches through their paces for safety, comfort, driveability and several other benefits. Partners like IRU will again join us, and we plan to hold a number of conferences on topical issues."

Keep up to date with the plans for Busworld Kortrijk by checking regularly on the Busworld website. You can already see the floor plans for the various halls and who will be exhibiting where.

October looks like a long time ahead, but Busworld Kortrijk will confidently maintain its position as the leading global bus and coach exhibition when October arrives.



Will there be more electric buses in Kortrijk?



Otokar has sold more than 750 Kent buses to Istanbul.



Expect additions to the popular VDL Citea range.



Van Hool has its ExquiCity in volume production.



The new Setra ComfortClass will be at Kortrijk.

SCANIA LAUNCHES COACH RANGE

Four years ago, at Busworld India in Mumbai, a small team from Scania went round all the stands, carefully checking all the products on offer. Scania had already entered the Indian market, supplying heavy duty trucks to the mining sector, but this was the first indication that the bus market could also be in their sights.

Subsequently, Scania established a subsidiary company and started building a factory about 40km from Bangalore with an initial target to build around 2,000 trucks and 1,000 coaches per annum within the next five years.

At Busworld India this year, Scania took a prominent stand and showed three coaches that had been developed to Scania designs and built by a partner in Malaysia. They were assembled in a modular system and, by next year, will be fully built in the new factory in India. There will also be around 20% local content in the chassis range.

The entry model was a 12 metre Metrolink HD seating 45 and powered by Scania 9-litre engine. Next in the family is the Metrolink HD, built to an overall length of 13.7 metres on three axles. It can have either 49 semi-sleeper seats, or 53 without calf support. This is powered by the larger 13-litre engine. The longest in the range is the 14.5 metre tri-axle coach which can have up to 53 semi-sleeper seats or 57 without calf support. All three coaches have Euro 3 engines, the Opticruise

8-speed automated gearbox and are built to an overall height of 3.7 metres.

The Metrolink has distinctive styling, featuring the established Scania "wrapping T" motif that distinguishes the truck range and sweeps from the front panels into the window line on the first bay on each side.

Coach chassis and body production is due to start on a trial basis from September this year with series production of complete coaches scheduled for early 2014. The three coaches at Busworld India have started a series of trials and will complete whole vehicle Type Approval and Certification within the next two months.

A spokesman for Scania at Busworld India also said that the company was looking at the market for high-end low floor city buses, but had not settled on any timescale. The first priority



Scania has developed the Metrolink coach range specially for India.

was to get the new coach range up and running.

Although Scania continues to work with its original Indian partner on trucks for the mining industry, a new sales and service network will be established for on-road trucks and coaches at strategic points throughout India.



The interior of the Scania Metrolink.

CORONA BUS EXPANDS

At Busworld India, Corona Bus Manufacturing Pvt Ltd announced that it was more than doubling the size of its factory in Haveli, Pune, to around 6,500sq m.

Corona said that it was the only manufacturer of integral buses in India and that its models had been approved as meeting the requirements of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission stimulus programme. Corona had received a number of major orders

for its current range of buses which are available with floor heights of 650mm, 740mm and 900mm.

Corona believes that its integral buses are one tonne lighter than any other bus available on the market. Corona has been established

more than ten years ago and started with a manufacturing licence from Neoplan. This included the use of independent front suspension and well-known proprietary units for the driveline. The company's next project is the introduction of a low floor bus in 2014.



Visitors on the Corona stand.



An integral Corona sleeping coach.

TURNAROUND AT ACGL

The Automobile Corporation of Goa Ltd is one of the largest bus and coach bodybuilders in India. The principal shareholder is Tata Motors with 43%. The remaining shares are held by public and private investors.

In the financial year 2010, ACGL made a loss, having built a total of 2,367 units. A new Managing Director, Mr V Krishnamurthi, was appointed and has turned the company round. When he arrived, he found that the company had around 700 chassis in stock, ready for

bodybuilding. He changed the design and construction of bodywork to suit just-in-time delivery of chassis. Bodies are partially built, ready to be married to chassis. The average build time came down from several weeks to a few days. This has not only benefitted cash flow and profitability, but also pleased customers, because they can obtain vehicles on very short lead times.

The two factories of ACGL have capacity for around 30,000 units per annum. One builds bodies on Tata chassis for Tata Motors' export markets. The other builds on all makes of chassis, including Tata Motors, for domestic customers. Currently, production is running at around 4,000 units per annum, with around 70-75% exported.

At Busworld India, ACGL launched a 12 metre sleeper coach with berths for 30 passengers, on two levels. Each berth had its own air-conditioning outlet, reading light, spectacle holder and mobile phone holder. There was an internal security camera system and other safety features. The company reckoned that the annual market in India for sleeper coaches was 3,000 units.

ACGL was very successful at Busworld India. All seven vehicles on the stand were sold to customers!

DECCAN DEBUT

A new name has joined the ranks of Indian bus and coach manufacturers, and launched three coaches at Busworld India. Deccan Auto announced plans to assemble coaches supplied in fully knocked down and semi knocked down kits from Zhongtong Bus Holding of Liaocheng, China.

The coaches at Busworld India were 8.0 and 12.0 metres on two axles, also a luxury tri-axle 13.7 metre model. All were semi integral designs with Chinese Weichai engines meeting Euro 3 emission limits.

Deccan Auto is backed financially by Mr P Prasad, the owner of Reddy Chenchu Lakshmi Steel & Cement. Deccan said that it was currently building a new factory about 30km from the city of Hyderabad which should be completed by September this year. The company plans to build coaches for the intercity, commuter and tourist sectors of the Indian market.



Hand over to a new owner on the ACGL stand.



And another new owner at ACGL.



Join us on Twitter (@Busworld), Facebook (page: Busworld) and LinkedIn (group: Busworld)!

Receive the latest bus and coach industry news via our monthly e-newsletter. Register at our website www.busworld.org

newsletter online 

The Busworld Newsletter is now available on-line at www.busworld.org. Alternatively, we can arrange to send it to you by e-mail.

Please make your request to inge.buytaert@busworld.org.