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Special Feature on **SCHOOL BUSES**

Presented by 

Force Motors



Force Motors' Traveller range gives it a unique position in the school bus market, in the form of an unmatched product offering with a number of advantages over regular chassis-built buses. The Trax range complements the Traveller and, coupled with a host of features for safety, comfort and connectivity, Force Motors'

product range provides an interesting choice for school children, parents and schools alike. Mr. Prasan Firodia, Managing Director, Force Motors, tell us why his company has an edge over competition when it comes to school buses.

Excerpts:

Force Motors' presence in the segment

Children are the future of any nation. We, at Force Motors Ltd. (FML), wish to be part of the pleasant memories the children carry of their days in school and the fun times spent with their friends.

In the recent past the way children travel to school has received a lot of attention from the media, considering that many school bus operators were ferrying children in a very hazardous manner. School bus accidents on account of negligence

of drivers and operators have prompted the law makers to lay down strict guidelines for construction of school buses. Now construction of school buses in India is getting more organized and safe and the services are professionally operated.

The Force school bus range products are the strongest contenders for the emerging School Bus Segment in India. Last year we launched our School Bus Range meeting all child safety regulations. Both our products, the Traveller and the Trax, now come with factory-fitted school bus features and are ready to use from day one.

Flagship product

Our flagship Traveller product range is truly unique. With its Monocoque construction, proven and reliable Mercedes-derived driveline and a choice of 4-wheel base options it is far ahead of competition in terms of economy of operations. Customers have experienced this in the School Bus Segment as well. Our 26-seater Traveller, which is the world's largest Monocoque panel van with advanced safety features like disc brakes on all four wheels plus ABS and EBD, has almost doubled its volume over the previous year.

It is noteworthy that this bus is at least one tonne lighter than the current chassis-built buses from competitors. In the School Bus Segment in particular, our volumes increased from 2,000 units to 3,000 units in 2014-15, and we expect to maintain this robust growth during 2015-16 also.

Focus on rural transportation

Our iconic product Trax is an ideal workhorse for the rural and semi-urban markets. With its rugged frame on chassis construction and independent front suspension, this product is also available complete with all school bus features. The Trax offering best-in-class space is an extremely rugged and reliable vehicle offering optimum return on investment.

The Traveller is available in a seating capacity range of 9 to 20 (excluding the driver) in four wheelbase options, namely, 3050, 3350, 3700 and 4020 mm. The Traveller 26 is available in 26+D seating capacity. Both products are BS III and BS IV compliant, with Mercedes' derived



power plants pumping around 80 to 130 hp power. The gear box and rear axles are also derived from Mercedes, delivering the highest standards of durability and reliability.

The Traveller 26 is equipped with the latest technology all-wheel disc brakes and dual mass fly wheel delivering best-in-class safety and driveability. These features today are available only in passenger cars, and we are the first to bring them to commercial vehicles.

The Trax also shares the same engine and drivelines as the Traveller but adapted to rural and semi-urban conditions. All our products go through the 6th Generation CED full body dip painting process for primer application, ensuring the highest level of rust protection. Robotic application of top coat gives car-like finish and gloss retention.

Addressing growing market demand

Safety is of prime concern for us at FML. We are the first to introduce ABS and EBD features on all our products, even before regulations came into effect. One more unique step we took in terms of enhancing safety was to introduce the Force Child Bus Tracker (CBT). The solution has been adapted to our Traveller school buses in association with our exclusive partner Map My India. The Solution is a two-tiered one. The basic solution enables parents and school authorities to track the bus, get SMS on deviation of routes, overspeeding, etc. The most unique feature in this is that once defined the system automatically gives SMS for an approach area, thus enabling parents to reach just in time to drop or pick their children.

The advanced solution uses the

RFID technology which sends SMS to parents when the child has boarded or alighted from the bus. It also sends an SMS if a child boards a wrong bus. This system is upgradable to adapting live cameras which can transmit live streaming from the bus back to a user interface. The tracking software is also available in the form of an Android app.

The School Bus Segment is in a very buoyant mood. Regulations are becoming stricter. The Bus Body Code is about to be re implemented. The School Bus Standards under AIS 063 will be enforced soon. The local make-shift bus body builders will vanish. Demand for OEM-built buses meeting all norms will increase. I think the School Bus Segment would double in size in the next two-three years.

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