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AUTONOMOUS TRUCKS:

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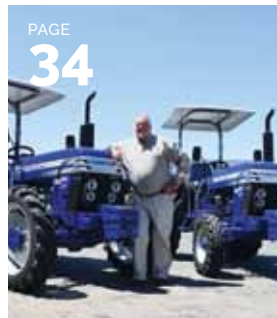
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EXCLUSIVE:

Behind the Great Wall



FOCUS was recently invited to China by *Commercial Vehicle* magazine to judge the country's first Truck of the Year competition, and meet with the who's who of the world's largest commercial vehicle market



CHARLEEN CLARKE

Countless flights and meetings, 16-hour working days, test drives of four of the country's leading trucks, numerous factory tours, lots of excitement and some "interesting" dishes ... this is the story of my visit to China.

While the purpose of my trip is primarily to judge the finalists in the country's first-ever Truck of the Year competition (I'm one of only two international judges, so it's a huge honour), I will also be gaining a fascinating insight into this market, thanks to meetings that are planned with a number of senior officials at leading truck companies.

FIRST STOP: FOTON DAIMLER, BEIJING

The trip kicks off in Beijing, home to Beijing Foton Daimler Automotive (BFDA), a 50/50 joint venture between Daimler and Chinese manufacturer Foton Motor. The company has produced Auman-branded trucks in Beijing since July 2012, and it's now one of China's top five truck manufacturers.

Last year, the Auman EST (EST stands for Energy Super Truck) debuted at the IAA in Hannover. The launch was a seriously big deal, because it was the result of a four-year research and development programme, which was strongly influenced by European standards and trends. Not surprisingly, the Auman EST is the first finalist in the Truck of the Year competition, and so, along with the other judges, I will be taking it for a spin.

The Auman EST, which is yet to be launched in China, is powered by a 12-litre Foton-Cummins ISGe5-460 engine or a 12-litre Euro-5 Mercedes-Benz OM 457 engine. The vehicle that we're testing features the former, paired to a 12-speed ZF TraXon automatic transmission.

At first glance, we're all hugely impressed by this truck tractor, which is clearly a leap forward for the Foton Daimler team. The design is a foretaste of the potential and future of the Chinese truck market; it's the poster child of this sector and has a lot of presence on the road.



ABOVE LEFT: The Truck of the Year team of evaluators gathers in front of the Auman prior to the commencement of the first test. The Auman is produced by Beijing Foton Daimler Automotive, which sold 402 124 vehicles last year.

ABOVE RIGHT: Air pollution in Beijing is horrific, meaning that masks are often compulsory.

LEFT: Vassilis Daramouskas (*Troxoi & TIR* magazine, Greece) scores the Auman.

HERE ARE SOME FACTS I GLEANED WHILE IN CHINA:

- There are about 13-million truck drivers in China. There is a shortage of drivers, because it's not considered to be a desirable job. A driver earns about 10 000 Yuan (R19 235) a month.
- Foton Daimler sold 200 trucks online in two seconds during a recent shopping festival.
- In 2016, 3.65-million commercial vehicles were sold in China (according to Statista, a leading statistics company).
- The Chinese truck industry is advancing rapidly! For instance, Foton has released China's first super truck with an autonomous driving system.
- Over 40 percent of trucks on China's roads are running empty.
- Transport and logistic costs in China are high: 18 percent of gross domestic product versus eight percent in Europe.

The cab is extremely spacious (possibly the most spacious within this sector) and the interior has a decidedly premium feel. The environment is very welcoming; we like the interior materials that have been utilised. Furthermore, the interior feels clean and uncluttered; it's almost akin to Nordic design from this perspective.

Fit and finish are very good throughout and most European truck drivers would feel right at home in this cab. In fact, the truck, itself, would not look out of place on the highways of Europe. The seat and sleeper bed feel comfortable.



The cab tilting is done electrically, which is very good. It's not easy to climb up and wipe the windscreen though; there is no handle to grip. The steps are quite high, but they can be used with relative ease. The exterior storage bins are useful (there are three of them). However, if the driver isn't quite tall, he won't be able to access the very rear of the topmost storage bins.

The interior is very good; the ergonomics are excellent. So, too, is the build quality. It's a pity that you cannot check the oil pressure electronically and from inside the cab (this needs to be done manually).

The automated gearbox is perfectly mated to the 331 kW Foton-Cummins powerplant. The powertrain and driveline are a big step forward within this market, and they are ideal for the more demanding (and better informed) Chinese customers. This really is a premium truck, but it offers all the ability and know-how of a tried and tested, reliable workhorse, too. It is a case of premium meets practicality.

The truck feels great at highway speeds; it is stable and visibility is very good. The steering is precise without being overly sensitive. The transmission is impressive; it's very intuitive, however it is located on the floor, which isn't ideal. It would be better if it was located on the steering column.

There obviously isn't a clutch, but the brake and accelerator pedals are faultless. I find the braking excessively harsh, but I'm told that this is in keeping with Chinese trucks. The vehicle is stable on the road, but there is a little bit of body roll.

The Auman has a suitably sophisticated suspension and good accompanying road-holding ability. It also comes with a very long list of safety and security equipment, including ABS, ASR, ESP, emergency brake assist, lane departure warning, tyre-pressure monitoring, theft protection, follow-me-home lighting and a load sensor. This truck is the shape of things to come in Chinese trucking!

SECOND STOP: FAW JEIFANG, CHANGCHUN

FAW Jeifang is our next port of call; we spend lots of time at its impressive headquarters, which is like a little town. FAW Jeifang is part of the massive FAW Group Corporation, which first surpassed the one-million annual sales figure in 2005.

The headquarters is still located on the same very spot where China's first automotive company, First Automotive Works, was formed on July 13, 1956. The Chinese people still describe Changchun as "the cradle of the Chinese automotive industry". At the time, the state-owned company relied on assistance from the former Soviet Union, but today it can more than stand on its own.

FAW hasn't only grown its expertise over the last 61 years; its model range has burgeoned, too. In stark contrast to the rather rudimentary medium truck that it built back in 1956, FAW produces a whole range of light-, medium- and heavy-duty trucks for most applications.

It also makes buses and luxury tourist coaches. Incidentally, I'm fascinated to discover that the medium truck that was launched – the CA10 – was produced for a whopping 30 years without any change!

We spend some time behind the wheel of its impressive heavy-duty truck, the J6, which isn't a finalist in the Chinese Truck of the Year competition because it will be replaced by the J7 at the end of 2017. However, the consensus is that the J6 is a world-class truck, a sentiment which is apparently shared by Chinese truck operators, given the fact that it sells faster than hot cross buns at Easter.

I notice that most of the trucks in the yard are red, and I enquire why this is the case. "Oh, that's because our customers are very patriotic. Red is the most popular colour ordered, because of our flag," one of the FAW staff members tells me, with much pride.

We also have a one-on-one with Hu Hanjie, president of FAW Jiefang, who tells me that he was





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present at the opening of FAW's factory in Coega, South Africa, in July 2014. "We want to express our heartfelt thanks to the government of South Africa for welcoming us to your country," he comments.

Hanjie says he's pleased by the company's achievements in South Africa thus far. "Our results in your country have been good. Our share of the market is growing steadily. We are currently achieving a market share of around five percent and I'm sure that this will grow.

"Thanks to the hilly terrain, you need 13-litre engines for your country, and we will bring these to South Africa. These engines are ideal for the topography of South Africa," he points out. Hanjie adds that he would definitely like to use the plant to produce vehicles for neighbouring countries that employ right-hand drive trucks.

more popular in China. We recently took part in an exhibition in Hong Kong, where we showed an electric truck. So far we have developed seven and 16-t electric vehicles. We are also working on fuel-cell vehicles. We are going to make an important contribution to the new-energy segment in China.

"At the same time, we need to provide more job opportunities for current and prospective employees (the company currently employs 23 000 people). It's important that we benefit society as a whole," he stresses.

According to Hanjie, the Chinese market is changing rapidly. "In China, most customers are individuals and not fleet operators, but we are now seeing more companies with bigger fleets emerging, as is the case in the Western world.

"They are putting more focus and attaching greater



ABOVE LEFT: Pictured at FAW's head office, from left, are: Yu Zhanbo (*Commercial Vehicle* magazine); Vassilis Daramouskas (*Troxoi & TIR* magazine, Greece); Charleen Clarke (**FOCUS**); Hu Hanjie, president of FAW Jiefang; Yu Jing and Shao Zitong (both from *Commercial Vehicle* magazine).

ABOVE RIGHT: FAW sold 299 418 trucks last year. Many of these were red, because the Chinese are so patriotic (and the Chinese flag is red).

South Africa isn't the only African country on FAW's radar. "We have assembly plants in Kenya and Ethiopia, too. The assembly plant in Kenya, which produces about 500 to 800 trucks a year, has a long history and our market share there is very good. We are attaching great importance to the Nigerian market, too. I also think that North Africa holds considerable potential," he says.

Returning to commentary on the Chinese market, Hanjie reveals that FAW is much more than just a producer of trucks. "We have a responsibility to shape the future of transport in China – because we're the largest truck company in my country. As such, we have a lot of social responsibility on our shoulders, too. We need to encourage the use of environmentally friendly products, for instance.

"We are working hard to make our products more fuel efficient. 'Green' trucks are already becoming

prominence on the ability of the truck. The efficiency of the trucks is becoming more important. Of course, price is a key element and our customers are very price sensitive, but now they are also looking at lifetime costs, residual values and the cost of repairs," he reveals.

I comment that it's fascinating how fast the company has developed in the last 30 years. "That's true," Hanjie agrees. "Whereas we produced a single model – the CA10 – for 30 years, we now have a full range from two to 55-t trucks. We're also launching new trucks all the time. In 1986, we launched our second-generation truck, and now we're on the sixth-generation, the J6. With each generation, the performance and quality of the truck has been greatly improved.

"We want to be a leading truck manufacturer, not only here in China, but also globally. We now have



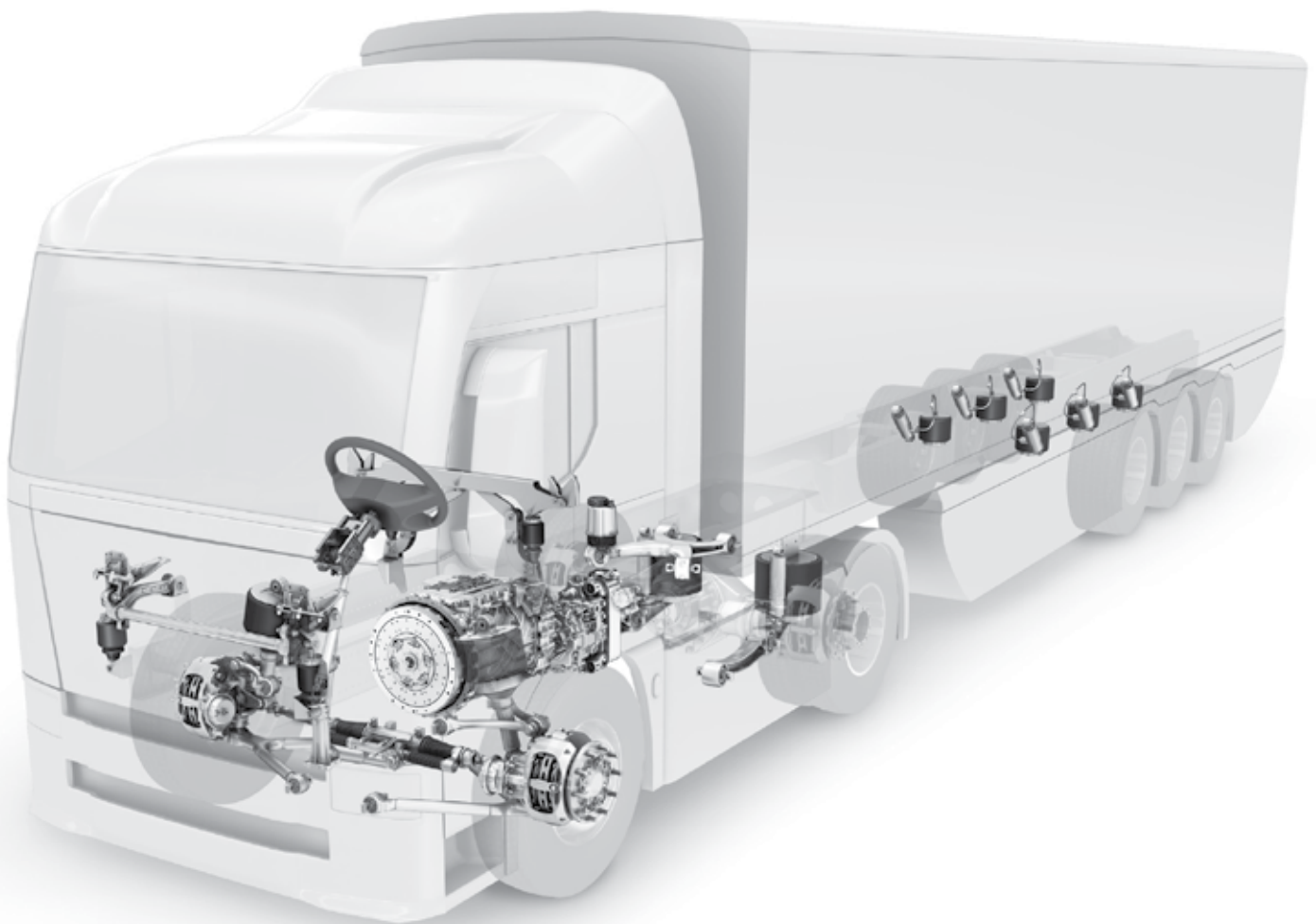
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UNPACKING THE COMPETITION

The Chinese Truck of the Year is judged by a jury comprising professionals from the commercial vehicle media, engineers, truck operators and members of the International Truck of the Year jury. For the 2017 competition, those jury members comprised Charleen Clarke (**FOCUS**) and Vassilis Daramouskas (*Troxoi & TIR* magazine, Greece). The evaluation criteria cover the fields of innovation, efficiency, emissions, safety, driveability and comfort. The event is organised by *Commercial Vehicle* magazine, China's leading trucking magazine.



almost 1 000 sales and service agents in China alone, and we have produced 6.6-million commercial vehicles to date. Our history may not be as long as the European truck manufacturers – but it's a proud one nevertheless."

Speaking of Europe, is he eyeing this lucrative market? "Not right now. This is a very mature market with many global and well-known manufacturers. I went to the IAA and exchanged ideas there. We will first put more effort into developing the market in Russia and then we will try to break through from Eastern Europe. We will need to do more studies of the market there. For the moment, this is not a target market.

"We also need more time to focus on emission legislation. We are shifting from National 4 to National 5, and Europe is on Euro 6 already. So we're not ready to enter that market. The European market is only under consideration for the very distant future..." Hanjie reveals.

Other export markets will play an increasingly important role in the company's future. "We're only exporting 7 000 units a year. By 2020 we want to

achieve exports of 25 000 units a year," he notes. Watch out world, FAW is coming!

THIRD STOP: JAC, HEFEI

Next up is Anhui Jianghuai Automobile Company, which, for some unknown reason, is abbreviated to JAC. It's based in Hefei, an utterly fascinating city, because it's developing so fast. It's literally one building site after the next...

We're not here to study architecture, however, and we kick off with various plant visits. While the truck production lines are impressive, we're blown away by the JAC Navistar engine plant – because it looks as clean and clinical as a modern, state-of-the-art hospital. The plant was established in 2014, at a cost of RMB 2 billion (R3.84 billion). It produces 800 000 engines and 200 000 gearboxes a year.

We meet with Stacy Ding, regional director of the light commercial vehicle department at JAC International, who tells me that the state-owned company is keen to enter the South African market – again.

"South Africa is a strategic market for us and we are trying to find good partners in your country. Of



course the exchange rate is not favourable, but we are planning to re-enter the South African market with pickups and trucks. We have already sent vehicles to South Africa for homologation and testing," she reveals.

While its Frison bakkie is also destined for South Africa, Ding is especially keen to offer its N Series to South African customers. "Since 1990 we have exported 200 000 N Series models to more than 130 countries, within South America, Asia, Africa and Middle East," she reveals. Since the N Series is the second finalist in the Chinese Truck of the Year competition, I will be driving it later.

The biggest export market for JAC is Algeria. "A CKD plant is currently under construction in that country. They will produce 20 000 vehicles a year – comprising N Series and the X200 light-duty truck. We have been number one in this market for five consecutive years," she reveals.

Egypt is the second-largest market. "We have been active in this market since 2006 and we generally sell around 1 000 units a year," Ding reports.

Angola is JAC's third-largest export market, although Ding concedes that it's terrible now. "That market is dead! It used to be such a good market for us. In 2007, we sold 1 000 light-duty trucks there!" she reports.

Like FAW, JAC doesn't have any immediate plans to enter the European market. The only exception to this rule is Romania, where JAC is represented by a dealer.

JAC's biggest competitor in many markets is Isuzu, which is fascinating because its N Series looks just like the Isuzu of the same name. It's interesting to discover how the reputation of the JAC has improved over the years – versus Isuzu.

"Back in 2011, we used to price our trucks at 50 to 60 percent of the Isuzu price. Now it's 90 percent.



ABOVE: JAC's N Series is very impressive – both inside and out. JAC sold 242 656 trucks last year.

LEFT: JAC's Hefei factory is surrounded by building sites, which is typical of this growing city. About eight million people live there, which is quite small by Chinese standards.

That's because our reputation has grown. The resale value of our products is much better than it used to be, too," she adds.

Later, I experience the N Series first hand, and I'm pretty impressed!

Given the fact that vans aren't favoured within the Chinese market, light delivery vehicles, such as the N Series, play a critical role within the world's biggest commercial vehicle market. JAC is the second-biggest player in this market and, after driving the N Series, it is easy to understand why.

This is a market segment where customers want to get a lot without making a substantial investment. They



want a durable, reliable, practical, efficient and robust workhorse – and that describes the N Series to a tee. JAC delivers on all these fronts with the N Series – and much more, too!

The interior, for instance, is surprisingly well appointed and the fit and finish is better than the norm within this sector. Incredibly, it even has a sleeper! This is something I have not seen before in this sector. The mattress is quite narrow but at least it is there.

It is clear that, with the N Series, JAC wishes to enrich the daily lives of drivers and make their journeys as comfortable as possible. This is evident in the upmarket feel of the switches and controls – this is NOT just a basic workhorse; it's much more than that.

The engine – the JND408D143-52 engine, a 3.2-litre powerplant that produces 105 kW of power and 450 Nm maximum torque – is powerful and torquey and it's ideal for inner-city distribution. We envisage that the total cost of operation will be advantageous and that maintenance costs will be extremely low. The steering is good; it's precise without being overly so. In addition, manoeuvrability is good and visibility is excellent.

On the downside, our test truck revs only to 2 000 r/min (which is obviously not normal) and the brakes are harsh (as is the case with many Chinese trucks).

These niggles aside, we concur that the N Series is the perfect light truck for everyday use; it packs a punch which is way beyond what's expected (or even demanded) by operators. JAC has raised the bar in this segment!

FOURTH STOP: C&C TRUCKS, WUHU

Our fourth stop is the fabulously named city of Wuhu (I sing "woohoo" all the time; the Chinese look at me as though I'm mad). It's the home of C&C Trucks,

which is part of the massive China International Marine Containers (CIMC) group.

C&C is a very young company – it opened its doors on December 18, 2010 – but it's known for its innovation. That's why its U480 6x4 truck tractor is the third and final finalist in the Truck of the Year competition. I will be driving it later, but first I tour the factory, which contains a surprisingly high percentage of orange trucks. This is because orange is associated with good luck in China, I'm told.

Then I meet with Eric Qi, director of the international business department, to learn more about the company. Qi tells me that it's still relatively small, employing 1 400 people, but that C&C is achieving much success. "We will sell 6 000 trucks in total this year, which is just one percent of the total local market," he says with a smile. It aims to produce 30 000 trucks annually "in the near future".



The company's unique selling proposition is the fuel consumption of its trucks. "Our fuel consumption is superior to that of other Chinese brands – just 30 l/100 km for a 6x4 loaded to the maximum gross vehicle mass (GVM) of 49 t," he reveals.

C&C is exporting, too. "This year we have exported 200 trucks to Vietnam and 300 units to Iran (we have eight percent of the market in that country). We've also exported small numbers to the Philippines and Bolivia. We will target Laos, Cambodia, Iraq, Turkey, Chile, Peru and Venezuela next year," he reveals.

The African market, especially Algeria and Ethiopia, are also on the company's radar. South Africa is not a priority right now, because the company only manufactures left-hand drive trucks. "We are planning to develop right-hand drive trucks at some stage and then we can enter the South African market," says Qi.

Later, when I drive the C&C U480 6x4 truck tractor, I hope that this happens sooner rather than later – because this truck tractor really shows the potential of the Chinese commercial vehicle industry. It is hugely impressive for a company that is extremely young (it didn't even exist eight years ago).

The development of such a mature heavy-duty vehicle in such a short period of time is nothing short of phenomenal.

Starting from the newly developed engine, which is one of the most powerful within the Chinese market at the moment (yet also remarkably efficient at just 30 l/100 km), to the refreshingly innovative design of the exterior and interior of the cab, the C&C truly demonstrates China's prowess within this sector of the transport industry.

We're also very impressed by the vehicle's driveability and the sophisticated handling of the U480 (which wouldn't be out of place in a European truck). And we're impressed by the fact that the cab was designed in Turin (as such, it combines European design with the unique flavour of the Chinese market).

LEFT TOP: The U480 6x4 truck tractor from C&C is very comfortable, even when you want to go for a nod.

BOTTOM LEFT: A U480 emerges from the factory. C&C sold 6 082 trucks last year, meaning it's small by Chinese standards.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Charleen Clarke and Vassilis Daramouskas at C&C's head office.

It is the first Chinese truck to get ADR authorisation (so it is approved for the transportation of hazardous goods).

Also noteworthy is the very low level of vibration, noise and harshness of the U480; it surprises and delights in this important area. The driver of the U480 will not tire easily; the interior is extremely comfortable. Drivers will also appreciate the two exterior storage bins; they're very big and offer good access.

A minor niggle is the handle at the A-pillar. It is badly designed in that you cannot get your fingers around it, so you cannot grab it properly when you're entering or leaving the vehicle. If I was the driver of the truck, this would drive me crazy.

Ergonomics are good; you don't have to reach far for anything except maybe the radio, which probably won't be adjusted that often.

The YU6K 12-litre engine delivers 353 kW (480 hp) and 2 200 Nm of torque.

The vehicle dynamics are surprisingly good – in fact, they are excellent. The steering is very good. It is active and responsive and you don't need to correct all the time when on the motorway. We can see that C&C is a manufacturer that is determined to break boundaries. The designers and engineers don't shy away from making bold moves and innovating within this segment; the instrument cluster is a good case in point.

As we all know, the Chinese automotive industry is one that is constantly changing and transforming. C&C is well placed to succeed within this competitive market, because it moves at the dynamic pace of a start-up company.

FINAL STOP: AWARDS BANQUET

The Auman EST is named the 2017 Chinese Truck of the Year. It's a deserving winner, I think, but actually all three finalists are impressive in very different ways; they're all winners in my mind... **F**



We're livin' on THE EDGE

What does rock band Aerosmith have in common with South Africa in 2017? This very song title...



GAVIN MYERS

I love Aerosmith. The band made some really good music that still sounds good today at – let's call it – concert levels of volume... I love South Africa, too. Our country began to make some really good music post 1994, and it still has a lot going for it..

However, as Steve Tyler and the boys sang:

*There's something wrong with the world today
I don't know what it is
Something's wrong with our eyes...*

Indeed, somehow, we've lost sight of what's important in our world, and we no longer know what it is. Countless issues left bubbling away beneath the surface are coming to a head in 2017.

For example, by the time you read this, thousands of South Africa's un- and underemployed could be rioting in the streets because unlawful and dodgy dealings in the South Africa Social Security Agency (Sassa) were left to continue after being under scrutiny for years.

I hope I'm wrong, of course. Those people need their money to survive.

Then we have the ongoing issue between the Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC), Tasima, and Telkom over current issues regarding the electronic National Traffic Information System (eNatis), which may cause problems with vehicle and drivers' licence renewals, as well as the payment of traffic fines.

At the time of writing (March 24), the Automobile Association of South Africa (AA) had just issued a press release on the matter, urging all vehicle owners and drivers to be aware of the problem.

The situation, as reported by the AA, stems from an urgent action brought through the North Gauteng High Court by the RTMC, which sought to stop Telkom from cutting services to eNatis.

Telkom, which is owed R8 million, has threatened to suspend services to eNatis. Tasima, the company currently in possession of eNatis, has said the RTMC must pay the money; leading to an impasse between the parties.

"Amongst all this the interests of the South African motoring public seems to have been forgotten. This matter has been dragging on for years, and now, finally, we are seeing the potentially devastating effects it will have on motorists," says the AA.

While private motorists still have the option of getting around by using public transport or carpooling, it's a different story for the thousands of road-freight transporters who keep the country ticking. If drivers or operators can't renew their driving or vehicle licences, how quickly could these businesses and jobs be lost? How quickly could South Africa grind to a halt?

To complicate matters, the Constitutional Court ruled that the current contract between the Department of Transport and Tasima be declared invalid, and the eNatis system be handed over to the RTMC. Tasima and the RTMC have, again, failed to reach an agreement.

"While we certainly hope this matter can be brought to a swift conclusion, we cannot help but be concerned about the fallout from this debacle.

"Law-abiding citizens are going to be the hardest hit, and, on top of everything, are paying the legal costs of the RTMC in the process. Who is responsible for this mess is a debate for another day; what is important now is that it is resolved quickly," the AA notes.

Living' on the edge? Like no other time in the last 23 years...

*Tell me what you think about our situation
Complication, aggravation
Is getting to you.*

Sing it Steve! **F**

LIGHT ME UP

One of my nemeses on the road has become traffic lights that are out of synchronisation.

Growing up in (what was then) Rhodesia I remember being a young lad with my father behind the wheel of the church bus. While driving at the speed limit, the traffic light in front of us would magically change from red to green.

I asked my father whether the bus had some incredible device that told the light to change just as we came along. With a chuckle, he said the traffic department had a team of officials who would go around town and check that the lights were synchronised. He proceeded to tell me all the benefits of this synchronisation in everybody's daily commute to work and the advantages it had for the economy.

After obtaining my driver's licence, I became aware of the



importance of traffic lights and the impact they have in controlling traffic congestion as the volume of road users increases.

I was very blessed to have lived in a suburban area for about 20 years, where I worked a short distance from my house and lived without any traffic congestion. Recently, my wife started complaining that it took two hours to drive from our suburb in Pretoria to our daughter's school near Johannesburg.

We, therefore, decided to move closer to the school. That is when I

realised the importance of working traffic lights, and how important it is that they are in sync with each other. I am contemplating how this issue has become such a point of contention, as we crawl along from one light to the next. My daughter has forbidden me from complaining to her about these issues, hence the letter to you.

This problem desperately needs to be resolved, since the stop/start driving has a major impact on all fronts. Just a few obvious problems directly attributed to this include traffic congestion (which in turn causes road rage), pollution from the exhaust fumes, and an increase in fuel consumption – with the added wear and tear on the clutch, engine and brake system, and the time spent in traffic, which is often at a complete standstill. All this just while waiting for the next light to change from red to green, only to amble along to the next intersection with the same frustratingly predictable outcome.

However, my "conspiracy theory" says the government does not want this problem to be resolved, as it makes huge sums of money from the levies on the sale of fuel. Our cars continue chugging while we sit in extended queues of traffic while waiting to reach our destinations.

Am I wrong in my assumptions? What can the Department of Transport do to solve this problem? Should I just continue with this downward spiral of playing "spot the next taxi driving through another red light"?

Writing this letter is my last resort and I hope that, one day, my daughter can say that it is such a pleasure not to be stuck in a traffic jam while waiting for the light to change.

John Henwood
Author and scriptwriter



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SINOTRUK:

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Sinotruk is taking on the South African market with vigour, eager to prove that this “new kid on the block” is well worth consideration. DUNCAN WARD reports



This progressive Chinese company is determined to make inroads into the South African market.

Zhong "Jeff" Qirong manager at Sinotruk SA, tells **FOCUS**: "We are already extremely strong in other African countries, where we are supported by a solid network of dealerships, after-sales service centres and parts shops."

Sinotruk and Qirong have been working tirelessly to make the foray into South Africa a success. Hours of research, planning, preparation and dedication have resulted in a network of dealerships being established in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town and Harrismith.



Sinotruk has also opened a spare parts and service centre in Boksburg, and established service stations along the N3. In addition, service stations have been established along the N1, from Cape Town to Johannesburg.

This rapid growth highlights the company's determination to conquer the local market. Whereas other manufacturers often quote the importance of viewing their products against their rivals, Sinotruk's focus currently lies solely on impressing the customer.

"We are not focusing on the competition; we are concentrating on our customers. They will make or break our business," Qirong contends.

He's not expecting an easy ride. "I am the first to concede that, as a new brand in South Africa, Sinotruk has a lot to learn. In time we will learn how to improve communication with clients, how to better understand and, especially, serve them. We are constantly looking to improve our products and service. All suggestions from clients will be warmly welcomed as this will help Sinotruk improve its service to customers," Qirong comments.

This open and humble culture has no doubt been instrumental in the success of the company on the

African continent. "Our trucks have been introduced to many leading logistic companies in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique where they have earned a reputation for good performance and reliability. We believe that we can achieve the same degree of success here in South Africa by serving the needs of clients and providing products that meet the highest standards," he says.

Of course, some local operators could be wary of a little-known brand. Qirong stresses that transport operators in South Africa have nothing to fear. "As stipulated in the rules of the South African Bureau of Standards and the Department of Roads and Transport, Sinotruk South Africa has already gained vehicle homologation certificates and Natis documents for

more than 100 models. We are committed to being an ethical and reliable supplier of quality vehicles, which meet all the local standards."

As can be seen from the 100-model line-up, Sinotruk will bring many more products to South Africa. "We will eventually bring our entire offering to South Africa, which includes truck tractors, drop sides, tippers, mixers, mining dumpers and all-wheel-drive military vehicles. We have sold these vehicles in neighbouring countries for many years," Qirong adds.

While Sinotruk may be new to some operators, the history of the brand can be

traced back to 1935, and it began developing heavy trucks in 1956. "Over the years, Sinotruk has entered into many international partnerships, allowing the company to accumulate extensive experience and improve its product quality.

"In 1983, for example, we achieved a world-first when we received approval from the Chinese government for a technology-sharing project with the Austrian company Steyr-Daimler-Puch, to introduce manufacturing technology of the Steyr 91 series heavy-duty truck," reveals Qirong.

Sinotruk also entered into a heavy-duty truck joint-venture project with Volvo in 2003, and in 2009 MAN acquired a 25 percent plus one share in Sinotruk.

The company now wants to partner with South African transport operators. "Sinotruk has been the top Chinese heavy-duty truck exporter for 13 consecutive years, selling 40 000 heavy-duty trucks in more than 90 countries and regions annually. Some 15 000 have been sold in Africa.

"We have a widespread global footprint of satisfied customers. Now we are focusing on South Africa. We are convinced that Sinotruk will soon meet with great success in this market," concludes Qirong. **F**

Keeping up with QUALITY

VIC OLIVER discusses the pros and cons of buying and fitting alternative parts to a vehicle

Truck and bus operators in South Africa have a wide selection of alternative parts that they can purchase, which are often a lot cheaper than the genuine replacement parts.

I have no problem with the use of alternative parts, but caution operators to examine them well to ensure that they meet the quality standard of the original parts, that they have been approved by the vehicle original equipment manufacturer (OEM) and have a South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) marking.

Using alternative parts that have not been approved by the vehicle manufacturer can jeopardise the vehicle warranty, especially when original fuel and air filters have been replaced with alternative parts.

Many truck and bus manufacturers also stipulate that if a vehicle is on a maintenance contract with the manufacturer or the dealer, only genuine replacement parts may be fitted.

Insurance claims can also be rejected if a vehicle is in an accident and it can be proved that an inferior alternative part was fitted to the vehicle, which failed in operation and was the cause of the accident.

Normally insurance companies are happy with the use of alternative vehicle body parts provided that the quality is good. They often encourage operators to use approved alternative or second-hand parts in an effort to reduce the repair costs on vehicles that are outside their warranty period.

The durability and quality of the alternative part also has to be taken into consideration.

A good example of a non-genuine, poor-quality part, which was fitted to a truck and failed within a few months and had to be replaced with a genuine part, is

a right-hand cab door.

The original door had been damaged in an incident where the outside mirror of the vehicle had hit the outside mirror of an oncoming truck on a dark narrow road one night. The impact was so severe that the entire door was damaged beyond repair.

The non-genuine door was fitted and, from the outside, looked like a perfect match. However, it was not long before the door started to disintegrate, due to the very weak interior door structure that could not support the mirror bracket.

Special caution has to be taken when buying replacement parts that have a direct effect on the safety of the vehicle. Poor-quality brake drums that contain insufficient chrome and copper are available in South Africa, for example.

Insufficient chrome in the steel results in the lack of hardness, which, in turn, reduces the life of the drum. Insufficient copper in the steel results in a very poor heat dispensation of the brake drum, which causes it to overheat and crack.

Clearly, the original saving that may have been gained from the purchase of the cheaper brake drum is completely lost when it fails and has to be replaced. Plus, the safety of the vehicle is put at risk by using these inferior brake drums.

Vehicle downtime is a major cost factor affecting the profitability of the company. Serious thought therefore needs to be given to the money that can be saved by the purchase of the cheaper alternative part, compared to the saving that can be derived from operating a more-efficient, durable and safe vehicle that has been maintained using good-quality, approved alternative or genuine parts. **F**



One of this country's most respected commercial vehicle industry authorities, VIC OLIVER has been in this industry for over 50 years. Before joining the FOCUS team, he spent 15 years with Nissan Diesel (now UD Trucks), 11 years with Busaf and seven years with International. Do you have a comment or thought you would like to share based on this column? Visit www.focusontransport.co.za and have your say!

Support GROWS

By the time you read this, Truck Test 2017 will be done and dusted. Our full report will be published in the May issue, but here's one final tribute to those companies without whom the test would not have been possible

MERCEDES-BENZ

Mercedes-Benz has participated in every truck test since its inception in 2012. The 2017 test holds significant importance for the brand as its Actros 6x4 truck tractor has received some important improvements, the merits of which the company hoped to prove during the test.

"We aim to use the test to demonstrate the frugality of our engines, while providing the necessary power for varying loads and distances," says Christo Kleynhans, product manager for Mercedes-Benz Trucks.

Read the full Mercedes-Benz Truck Test 2017 profile on page 22.

SINOTRUK


Adding to its drive to enter the South African market and obtain the type of success it has in other countries around the continent, Sinotruk South Africa entered a HOWO V7G 320 kW (430 hp) truck tractor into Truck Test 2017.

"After two years of preparation, we now need to show the good performance and reliability of our trucks, and let people know that we are here in South Africa, and in Africa," says Zhong "Jeff" Qirong, manager at Sinotruk SA.

ONE SURE

An event such as Truck Test requires many stakeholders to come together to ensure it is a success. With the loads kindly sponsored by Sephaku Cement, the matter of insurance was the next important factor ... happily niche insurance underwriter One Sure again supported this crucial aspect of the test.

The company provided full all-risks insurance cover, free of any excess, for the cement products that were carried during the test.

Says Sid Beeton, divisional transport manager, One Sure: "At One Sure we believe in the 'transport solution'. We strive to provide non-insurance products, as well as our core risk-protection covers." 

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"Although the Truck Test is more to do with vehicle performance, safety features are part of that and we also support such initiatives in the transport industry. We trust this shows our commitment to give back to the industry," he says.

SUB-SAHARAN TYRE SERVICES

A company interested in promoting road safety, Sub-Saharan Tyre Services – with its wheel-securing device, Wieloc – is keen to attract operators that are safety conscious and proactive in providing a higher standard of road transport.

"Wieloc participated in Truck Test 2017 to gain exposure among professional equipment and service providers to the road transport industry, so that the simplicity and practical benefits of the Wieloc product could be appreciated and documented for user consideration," says Dave Mills of Sub-Saharan Tyre Services.

Wieloc prevents truck wheels from running loose or, worse, coming off the vehicle, by mechanically clasp two adjacent wheel nuts, preventing them from loosening.

"Roadside tyre-related breakdowns present their own set of problems for the operator. Application of the Wieloc product will not interfere or delay the

service required in a breakdown event. This represents an enormous benefit to the safety-conscious operator. As an added benefit, Wieloc has also proved to be an effective deterrent against wheel theft; a huge risk, particularly for cross-border operations," says Mills.

"Transporters of hazardous chemicals and other dangerous goods, as well as bus and coach operators, will obtain immediate safety benefits – to the delight of SHEQ-compliance officers," Mills concludes.

VOITH TURBO

Voith Turbo is a name synonymous with retardation solutions and the company threw its weight behind Truck Test 2017 in support of the various original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) that fit its products to their vehicles.

"There are many benefits to the application of Voith Retarder products, which include reduced wear of brake linings, improved safety and fuel consumption and a greener approach to the environment, due to less brake-lining dust entering the atmosphere. The latest technology integrates completely into OEM technology and provides reliability and improved trip times, due to a higher average speed," says Frederick Smit, vice president – mobility.

"We are confident that the tests will prove the advantage of having a Voith Retarder fitted to a vehicle," he adds.

ZF

As ZF South Africa prepares for vehicles fitted with its TraXon fully automatic transmission – the successor to the popular AsTronic – to start operating locally in due course, the company put its support behind Truck Test 2017 to showcase its product portfolio and service offering to the market.

"ZF offers technical and product support, original equipment parts sales and field service and repairs through our branches in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. Through Truck Test we hope to continue to build lasting relationships with OEM customers and provide them with insight into our product and service offering," says marketing manager Pieter Potgieter.

DROMEX

With personal protective equipment (PPE) among the most important components of a professional trucking operation, we welcomed PPE supplier Dromex to Truck Test 2017. The company supplied its S3 Boots to Truck Test officials, which have a water-resistant leather upper, steel toe cap, an injected dual-density





LEFT: ZF threw its weight behind truck test as it prepares to introduce the TraXon range of gearboxes.
FAR LEFT: The Michelin support team ready for Truck Test 2017.
BELOW: The Wieloc wheel-securing device is easy to install.

polyurethane sole along with a steel midsole. Dromex supplies a vast range of appropriate head-to-toe protective equipment that conforms to ISO, EN and South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) standards.

"PPE is very important to the local transport industry, because all drivers are potentially exposed to fire hazards. We therefore recommend fire retardant workwear as minimum protection," says Stephen Mallett, Dromex general manager.

"Depending on the specific hazards of the cargo, PPE is crucial for those staff who assist with loading and unloading and for the driver – especially in the event that the truck is involved in an accident."

Mallett suggests that all transport operators need to ask the following questions in determining their PPE needs:

- Is the cargo hazardous?
- Is the driver especially visible?
- Is he wearing appropriate footwear?
- What eye protection is needed?

MICHELIN

Previous editions of the Truck Test have seen certain tyre manufacturers showing their support, while this is the first time that Michelin Tyre Company South Africa (Michelin) has been a partner.

"Michelin is much more than just a tyre manufacturer; it has a comprehensive service offering. Through its continued innovation, Michelin provides fleet operators with solutions that create value. These services aim to lower cost per kilometre, improve company profitability and protect the environment,"



says Yoliswa Nkomo, operations marketing manager B2B, Michelin.

During Truck Test 2017, Michelin provided entrants with access to Michelin Tyre Care, a digital tyre service offering designed to simplify the maintenance of tyres and reduce operating costs.

"The test provides an exciting opportunity for Michelin to network with the transport industry and to present our innovative tyre-check services. Michelin is committed to providing sustainable mobility through innovative solutions for fleet operators," says Nkomo.

"One of the major challenges for fleet operators has been to reduce operating costs while maintaining the quality of the service delivered to our clients," she elaborates.

"Michelin Tyre Care provides real-time monitoring of vehicles, which enables operators to reduce vehicle breakdown and improve the safety of goods and people being transported," Nkomo concludes. **F**



Continuously striving for **IMPROVEMENT**



Iveco entered two of its key models into Truck Test, with the intention to improve on previous results

Product marketing manager, Elvis Mutseura, explains the value of the test from the manufacturer's perspective: "Truck Test has become a key tool for fleet operators to see how the different vehicles offered on the market stack up against each other."

Mutseura further explains that Iveco makes use of the data from the test to give it invaluable insights into the capabilities of its trucks, in a direct comparison with their rivals.

Thanks to the stringent checks and quality measures put in place to standardise the test and the loads, each manufacturer can use these statistics with the knowledge that every truck was placed in identical conditions, with no extraneous circumstances to skew the figures.

"The test allows us as manufacturers to see how our vehicles perform against each other in a closely controlled environment," says Mutseura. "It is a very cost-effective way to pit one's trucks against those

of the competitors, thanks to the collaboration of the various sponsors."

The 6x4 long-haul market is Iveco's lifeblood, as Mutseura explains by likening the truck tractors to the heart that pumps South Africa's economic blood, keeping everything working. He reiterates the industry-favourite saying: "If trucks stop, South Africa stops."

If trucks are the heart that pumps the economic blood of South Africa, Mutseura reckons that the N3 corridor between Durban and Johannesburg is as important as the aorta in the human body. He believes it is logical to test trucks on this route and that it will provide an accurate representation of a real operation running on this vital corridor.

The two trucks Iveco entered into the test this year were the Stralis 480 Hi-Way (AS750S48TZP), which pulled an interlink tautliner, and the Trakker 440SR (AT440T44TH SR), which pulled a tridem flat-deck trailer.

Mutseura believes Truck Test 2017 might be Iveco's year to return better figures with its "secret weapon",



the Stralis, which boasts "unparalleled driver comfort". The Trakker, which is an "extremely rugged truck", also has some polished aspects, such as creature comforts and driver friendliness, which add some brawn to the mix.

These trucks were selected for their efficiency and capability, as the demanding loads needed to be transported using the least fuel possible.

According to Mutseura, they are extremely well suited for the South African market, and the Stralis is an "undisputed champion in long-haul transport". "The Trakker continues to impress in the side-tipping game, and excels on long cross-border trips, where tough road conditions can add another dimension to the challenges faced by operators," he adds.

Iveco has a holistic approach when it comes to its product offering, and, as such, has extended its service offering in South Africa to mirror the brand's offering in Europe. Iveco's range of products consists of, but is not limited to: a three-tonne panel van in the Daily range; the HCV Eurocargo; the Fiat-inspired

682 workhorse; the Trakker and Stralis extra-heavy commercial vehicles; as well as some serious off-road, mining, and extreme-load vehicles in the Iveco Astra range.

"Iveco caters for all the truck sectors and is present in the bus sector, too, with the well-received Afriway bus range," Mutseura adds.

By following its philosophy of being a true "partner for sustainable transport", the company's offering extends even further than its expansive product range.

This means that Iveco can provide the full range of products required by operators. These include service and maintenance contracts, vehicle finance (through its partnership with WesBank), roadside assistance and driver training.

"Finally, Iveco would like to thank everyone involved in the test for their hard work as well as the many sponsors that allowed Truck Test 2017 to go forward," Mutseura concludes. **F**



An experienced
HAND



Mercedes-Benz South Africa (MBSA) is no stranger to Truck Test, and this year the company aimed to show how its improved Actros can save money for its operators

Mercedes-Benz is one of the few original equipment manufacturers that has taken part in every Truck Test since the event's inception in 2012. This year it once again set out to show that it is "a force to be reckoned with at events such as Truck Test". That's according to Christo Kleynhans, product manager for Mercedes-Benz Trucks.

"This particular event is of importance to us as our trucks are tested under genuine road conditions similar to those they experience on a regular basis. MBSA has consistently achieved results that show the competitiveness of our product," Kleynhans elaborates.

In 2017, Mercedes-Benz entered a single Actros 2646LS/33 6x4 truck tractor that hauled the tautliner interlink combination. The 2646LS/33 is unique in that it is fitted with hypoid axles and a direct-drive transmission.

"Hypoid axles and direct-drive transmissions increase efficiency in long-haul operations by reducing operating losses, which, in turn, saves fuel. This combination will prove that the Actros offers exceptional fuel efficiency and will yield positive results," Kleynhans says confidently.

MBSA entrusted the driving duties to one of its most experienced staff members – a man who needs no introduction to Truck Test, or the South African trucking fraternity: Duncan Prince, manager for specialised heavy trucks. Says Kleynhans: "Duncan has a wealth of sales and technical experience and can provide valuable feedback from the test, which will allow us to improve our product offering even more."

How does the team think the vehicle fared? "Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a typical operation. We cannot predict our results in the test as fuel consumption can vary greatly depending on route, load and trailer configuration. We are, however, confident that the chosen route will confirm that the Mercedes-Benz Actros 2646LS/33 provides the most ideal mobility solution for all of our customers," Kleynhans says.

Of course, MBSA knows full well that fuel efficiency is not the only solution a transport operator requires.

"At Daimler Trucks, we continue to take each and every opportunity presented to us to demonstrate why we are the world's leading truck manufacturer. MBSA is committed to introducing the latest technologies if we are confident that they will perform in the South African environment and provide meaningful savings to our customers. These technologies range from the hypoid axles and direct-drive transmissions, to safety systems such as Brake Assist and Telligent Distance Control," Kleynhans comments.



ABOVE: The Mercedes-Benz Actros loads up at Sephaku Cement Delmas in preparation for Truck Test 2017.

"The trucking industry is competitive – the demands and requirements are often highly complex and require solutions that are geared towards vastly improving efficiency while reducing costs. We know that the Actros will prove – as it does on our country's roads daily – that it is unmatched," he adds.

"In so doing, we hope to reaffirm to the truck market that in independent tests we achieve competitive payload, fuel consumption and productivity results that match the internal tests we have run in the past.

"Truck Test will also allow us the opportunity to evaluate these improvements against our competitors. We have aimed to demonstrate the frugality of our engines, together with their ability to provide the necessary power for varying loads and distances," Kleynhans concludes. **F**



MICHELIN TAKES CARE OF YOUR TYRES WHILE YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR BUSINESS

Michelin Tyre Care is a tool that provides a solution to truck owners and fleet managers with a need for insights and information that will give the best return on investment for their tyres. Fleet managers operate in an increasingly testing environment, with escalating operating costs and a highly competitive landscape. They have a clear expectation which includes safety, efficiency, reliability and cost reduction.

Previously the monitoring of tyres was viewed as a manual process with high-intensity admin, limited frequency of vehicle inspections and reports were not delivered in real time.

Michelin Tyre Care, however, will provide a digital and connected solution for fleet operators.

Michelin works alongside truck owners and fleet managers to analyse their mode of operation, identify their needs and develop innovative services, offering them far more than just tyres, but tyre services.

Michelin Tyre Care has reduced the time it takes to check tyres by threefold; making it possible to consistently check the status of the fleet. As a result, monitoring the pressures, tread



MICHELIN

A better way forward

depth and general condition of tyres is easier and accurate, enabling optimum coordination of the operations to be carried.

Michelin Tyre Care is all about collecting and recovering all information concerning the tyres on a fleet of vehicles, in a reliable, automatic, simple, rapid and relevant fashion. All this organised intelligence will have an immediate impact on the fleet operators' costs and performance of the tyres

"Michelin Tyre Care is beneficial to fleet operators, because it reduces breakdown and vehicle immobilization, improves

safety of people and goods carried, and control tyre budget," says Yoliswa Nkomo, Operations Marketing Manager – B2B at Michelin.

Michelin is underpinning its role as a business service partner by providing fleet operators with efficient solutions and improve their operational efficiency. Better maintenance, better monitoring, better traceability and better business coordination: with the Michelin Tyre Care digital solutions, detailed truck tyre management will mean getting the best out of tyres.



Big YELLOW TAXI

UD Trucks has launched its new heavy commercial vehicle (HCV) for global growth markets. It's called the Croner, and it's superb. GAVIN MYERS went to Bangkok to bring you this scoop

The soundtrack to the Croner launch in Bangkok, Thailand, was *Big Yellow Taxi* by the Counting Crows – well, it was for me, anyway. After what I know about Thailand's tourist spots, like Phuket, the line "they paved paradise to put up a parking lot" ran through my head...

I was disappointed (albeit a little fascinated) by the capital city – what with its haphazard hustle and bustle, smog you can taste and narrow, gridlocked streets that are impossible to navigate without local knowledge, but this isn't a travel rant...

Rather, it's a report on a very important new vehicle for UD Trucks. Revealed to the media from Africa, Asia, the Middle East and South America at the flagship UD Trucks Bangkok dealership, the Croner stood proud in its eye-catching launch colour, whimsically dubbed Honey Yellow.

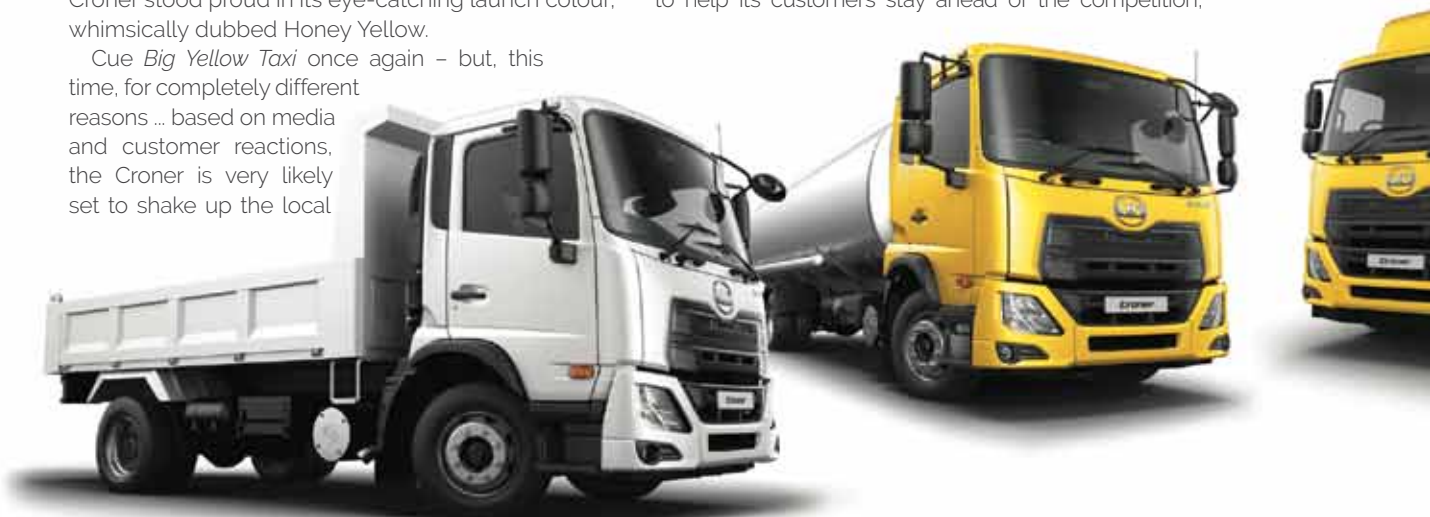
Cue *Big Yellow Taxi* once again – but, this time, for completely different reasons ... based on media and customer reactions, the Croner is very likely set to shake up the local

HCV landscape when it lands in South Africa around mid-year. It should, really, be the Big Yellow Taxi that takes UD Trucks back to a leading position in the segment that it vacated around two years ago.

So what makes this new model so impressive?

According to UD, the Croner was developed over six years specifically for growth markets across Asia, Africa, the Middle East and South America. To meet this brief, an equivalent of three-million kilometres in reliability and durability testing was completed, while it was also entrusted to customers in six countries and three continents for 18 months and 1.4-million kilometres of field tests in actual operations. In South Africa, this honour fell to Vital Distribution, which covered 175 911 km with its test mule.

The result, says UD Trucks, is a vehicle engineered to help its customers stay ahead of the competition,



through the simple concept of saving time. Croner is, after all, named after the god of time in Greek mythology.

Uptime, productivity and being able to offer the right vehicle for the job were among the biggest development targets. To this end, Croner is available in 21 derivatives. The range starts with the compact MKE version with its 10,4 to 11-t gross vehicle mass (GVM) and 2,1-metre-wide day or sleeper cabs.

The middle derivative is LKE multi-purpose model that fills the 12 to 14-t GVM spectrum, using the same cabs as its smaller brother. The big daddy in the

of 6 000 and 6 500 mm are also available for 15 and 17-t variants.

UD claims that the Croner has a chassis frame (which has been pre-punched for easy mounting of equipment) with the highest tensile strength in its class, while being engineered to be flexible.

Then, of course, there are the advancements made in suspension and braking.

Croner offers several suspension options including leaf springs and air suspension. A taper-leaf system can be fitted at the front for extra comfort, while a



range is the PKE, which has a GVM of 15 to 17 t and a 2,3-metre-wide sleeper cab. The new cabs improve aerodynamics by five percent.

Then, of course, there is the plethora of engine, gearbox and wheelbase options.

Powering the Croner is a new range of five- and eight-litre engines with either Euro-3 or Euro-4 emission ratings, spanning from 136 kW (180 hp) to 209 kW (280 hp). These can be paired with six- or nine-speed manual gearboxes or a six-speed automatic developed in partnership with Allison.

Purchasers of the manual versions will be pleased that UD has fitted the biggest clutches in this class, meaning they should last longer. A cerametallic clutch plate is also available to ensure reliability in high-temperature conditions. All versions are offered with a range of power take-off (PTO) options, which deliver more torque than previous PTOs.

Six basic wheelbase options, ranging from 3 450 to 5 500 mm, are available. Longer wheelbase options

heavy-duty version of the multi-leaf spring suspension is available; offering increased carrying capacity for operations such as construction.

Optional rear air suspension is also available for customers that transport sensitive freight. A front stabiliser is fitted to aid body control.

From going to stopping, the Croner again features another "largest in class" ... its S-cam, full-air brake system has the largest brake foundation size (in terms of diameter and width) for better stopping power, heat dissipation and service intervals. ABS will be standard on South African models.

The result is an accomplished, high-quality vehicle that – as far as could be deduced on the very short test route – operates with exceptional comfort and ease. It boasts so much more, as well – like the standard-fitment telematics, multi-function instrument display, dual-setting speed limiter and ergonomic interior design – but those details will have to wait for the full local launch report..

Oh yes, we'll be counting down the weeks until this Big Yellow Taxi officially arrives on local shores – and we know UD fans won't be disappointed. **F**





More than just a **DINKY TOY**

The South African light commercial vehicle (LCV) market is almost as complex as those of far heavier vehicle segments. GAVIN MYERS chats to some LCV market leaders to unpack the dynamics of this segment

While many “truckers” in South Africa (including those who supply, service and operate trucks) don’t view LCVs as pukka commercial vehicles – in the same sense that they’d view a 56-t, long-distance rig, or an eight-tonne distribution truck – these little tykes have always made up the majority of sales in the local commercial vehicle arena.

In February, for example, around 14 416 units were sold (this figure includes aggregated sales figures from Mercedes-Benz South Africa and Associated Motor Holdings, now known as Motus Corporation). The undisputed sales king of them all was, once again, the Toyota Hilux – of which 3 086 units were sold, also giving the Hilux overall honours as South Africa’s best-selling vehicle for the month.

Incidentally, sales of the Hilux alone accounted for more units than the medium, heavy, extra-heavy and bus segments together!

Of course, it cannot be denied that bakkies in the LCV segment are becoming increasingly oriented to the passenger market, as more and more private buyers opt for the mix of go-anywhere off-road ability, practicality, versatility and car-like comfort offered by modern double-cab bakkies.

According to a spokesperson from Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa, the driving factors include greater choice regarding powertrains, transmissions, drivetrains and body styles.

Ernst Grater, senior manager: dealer sales, at Toyota South Africa Motors, believes fleet buyers of the Hilux outnumber private buyers by only about 1.5:1.

It’s a similar situation at General Motors South Africa (GMSA), where commercial vehicles for business purposes account for about 60 percent of the volume, while 40 percent of LCVs sold are for private use, notes Brian Hunter, GMSA general manager, sales.

“Double-cab LCVs are gaining popularity among South African consumers as they are used for family and leisure purposes. We have seen a number of new value models entering the double-cab market, which has stimulated growth in this segment,” says Hunter.

Jaco Steenekamp, general manager sales and marketing for VW Commercial Vehicles, agrees. “We are seeing more private buyers, due to the absolute versatility of a double-cab bakkie, together with the latest safety and comfort features now available in most offerings.”

By way of example, Steenekamp says that private customers account for 60 percent of the Amarok double-cab sales. On the other hand, commercial buyers of the Amarok single cab account for 80 percent of sales.

While bakkies are South Africa’s perennial favourite in terms of small workhorses, an increasingly large case is being made for the van. Nonetheless, according to Ford, most of these vehicles are bought for application-specific roles. Their relative sales remain small when compared to bakkies.

Grater offers an opinion: "Panel vans do not share the same history, sentiment or fondness in the South African market as they do in the United Kingdom or Europe. Weather conditions in Europe will not necessarily allow for the usage of bakkies, whereas South African conditions do.

"Furthermore, double-cab bakkies allow for more than two occupants, where the vast majority of panel vans allow only for two occupants. Also, because bakkies are generally being used for business and private purposes, these vehicles are preferred to panel vans."

businesses. "While looking more at the running costs of their fleets, LCV buyers demand a high level of service that equals or surpasses that of passenger car buyers," suggests Ford SA.

Steenekamp expands: "Business customers' expectations of the vehicle are first and foremost reliability, then low cost of ownership, and then practicality. They expect the dealership to be able to understand their transportation needs, and to recommend and supply the correct vehicle, complete with financial and aftersales solutions.



(As an interesting side note, Grater reveals that for every Quantum panel van or people carrier sold, seven of the Ses'fikile minibus taxis are sold.)

Steenekamp adds that purchase price can also be a factor. "The entry price of a one-tonne, single-cab pickup in the local market is often less than that of a one-tonne panel van."

Of course, VWSA is no stranger to the van. Until the arrival of the Amarok, these vehicles were the mainstay of its commercial offering. (Steenekamp states that commercial buyers account for 80 percent of Transporter Crewbus/Panel Van and Caddy Crew Bus/Panel Van sales, while the Crafter has 100-percent commercial-customer sales.)

The company even expanded on its range by converting, ironically, a passenger vehicle for commercial use. This is the unique-to-South-Africa Polo Vivo Xpress (which we reviewed in the September 2016 issue) that was designed to blend the safety and comfort of a hatchback with ample loading space and payload. Commercial-vehicle pundits would know that GMSA has been fighting in this niche corner of the segment for a while now, too, with its Spark Pronto...

"These van-type vehicles are very popular in Europe because of the weather conditions. In South Africa they are attractive to small businesses, due to low initial purchase and running costs and, as the vehicle is homologated as a LCV, it allows for VAT-registered businesses to claim back VAT," Hunter says.

Much like buyers of larger commercial vehicles, LCV buyers can't, and don't, look only at the initial purchase price when considering an LCV for their



Furthermore, most business customers expect a single point of contact with the dealership and for continuous added value to be delivered by the dealership and the brand."

With this in mind, what do the original equipment manufacturers expect from the market in the short term? Ford suggests the segment "is becoming more competitive with new entries entering the market on a monthly basis". The company expects the LCV market segment to remain strong for 2017.

Steenekamp is equally optimistic. "The LCV segment of the market has started off more strongly than in 2016, and a full-year growth of three to five percent is expected during 2017," he notes.

Hunter offers a caution, however, that LCV purchases may remain subdued, due to negative economic factors and uncertainty in the small-business environment. **F**



Carrying MADE EASY

The JMC Carrying SWB is an affordable workhorse that has a unique selling point – it requires only a standard code B driving licence. GAVIN MYERS puts the drop-side version to the test

How many trucks are available at less than R240 000 and feature standard luxuries such as air-conditioning, power steering and windows, and a radio/CD player? JMC offers its Carrying SWB Single Cab Lux drop side at R239 880 – which appears to offer exceptional value.



Its unique selling point, though, is a gross vehicle mass (GVM) of 3 495 kg, a tare mass of 1 865 kg, and a payload of 1 630 kg. When these figures are considered it means that the Carrying can be driven by anybody with a basic code B driving licence.

The single cab is also available in standard spec and with a van body, while a long-wheelbase version with dual rear wheels and a 2,8-t payload is also on offer. This model, however, requires a code C1 licence.

The critical dimensions of the SWB drop-side version are an overall length of 4 735 mm; wheelbase of 2 940 mm; rear body length of 3 100 mm; width of 1 600 mm; and height of 380 mm. Permissible front and rear axle loads are 1 704 and 2 075 kg respectively.

Powering the Carrying is a 2,8-litre turbodiesel engine that produces 84 kW at 3 600 r/min and 235 Nm at 2 300 r/min. This drives through a five-speed synchromesh gearbox to the single rear wheels fitted with 6,5-15 10PR tyres. Braking is by hydraulic front and rear drum brakes. An exhaust brake is available only on LWB versions.

Those are the vital specs, but how does the

Carrying SWB perform in the real world? To help us find out, Rouberto Building Materials in Randburg came to our aid, allowing us to transport various loads to some of its customers.

We discovered that the sides of the Carrying's rubber-lined load bay feature nifty latch locks and are easy to open – although they do not fold flat past the hinges. This could result in the welds breaking should a careless forklift driver bump it, for example.

Loaded up to its 1,6-t capacity with bricks, sand, cement and paint – and with all the necessities checked – we set out on a typical local delivery route.

With a full load the Carrying proved just as easy to drive as when it is unladen – with a significantly improved ride and more stable handling (unladen, the Carrying is jittery and tends to wander). The 235 Nm is sufficient to lug the load even in a higher ratio at low revs.

With its hydraulic power steering and compact 5,2-m turning radius, the Carrying is easy to manoeuvre within tight spaces.

Practically speaking, the cab features numerous small cubbies and the middle seatback folds forward (but not flat) to reveal a tray. The cab is fitted with predominantly hard-wearing materials, though some of the plastic fittings feel a bit flimsy and likely to break.

There are a few other negative aspects, though. The engine is fairly loud, rough and unrefined which, combined with the confined cab, limited range of seat adjustment (although the steering wheel is adjustable), and hard ride quality, can be tiresome on the driver.

JMC backs the Carrying with a five-year/120 000 km warranty, four-years of 24-hour roadside assistance and a three-year/90 000 km service plan (service intervals are set at 10 000 km). As an affordable entry-level option, the Carrying SWB represents good value and it seems to have proved itself in a segment with just a few select rivals. **F**

Reaching for the STARS

MAN's used-vehicle division, MAN TopUsed, is shooting for the stars and giving each truck it sells the "MAN seal of quality"

Following its best-ever sales year in 2016, and having already chalked up sales ahead of budget in 2017, MAN TopUsed is now aiming to give the buying experience an even more personal touch. Head of MAN TopUsed, Gert Fourie, is extremely upbeat about the new developments in his used-vehicle business.

MAN TopUsed customers will now physically get to touch and feel three distinctly different levels of used vehicle preparation:

- One Star – Certificate of Fitness (CoF) with health check;
- Two Star – CoF, mechanically checked, cosmetically refurbished with health check;
- Three Star – CoF, mechanically refurbished, one-year warranty with health check.

"From time the vehicle is taken in, MAN TopUsed ensures that it is further prepared for resale – the scope of work being confirmed by the star rating with a visible seal of quality.

"These preparations enable MAN to offer warranties and even service contracts for applicable model types and qualifying customers. MAN TopUsed has a vested interest in every MAN asset, and will ensure reliable resale values coupled to dependable performance," Fourie explains.

Fourie notes that MAN always uses genuine MAN parts when preparing MAN TopUsed vehicles for onward sale.

"Knowing that our customers are keeping vehicles for longer, we are focusing on ensuring they are getting the utmost value for money with our aftersales offerings," he adds. This extends

beyond TopUsed to an all-inclusive suite of services that includes: dynamic programmes for parts such as MAN ecotrade, where clients receive substantial discounts on new parts in exchange for their used parts for potential refurbishment; extending warranties on new parts to a second year; and conducting free health checks for customers' vehicles while they're in MAN workshops for routine work.

"These initiatives, together with our prudent trade-in process and refurbishment programmes, enable us to offer a wide variety of transport solutions, at several price levels, and with various degrees of guaranteed peace of mind.

"Having such great product offerings also enables us to expand our footprint of authorised TopUsed dealers (including various African countries, too)," Fourie elaborates.

"For a sales outlet to qualify as an authorised MAN TopUsed franchise, adherence to stringent rules and standards must be demonstrated. Through our main dealer in Centurion, my team and I will be at the service of any potential customer throughout southern Africa.

"We at MAN are in this business for the long haul, and with this stamina, we are holding our own and innovatively expanding our market offering to our loyal customers," concludes Fourie. **F**



ABOVE LEFT: Gert Fourie says MAN TopUsed vehicles provide proud buyers with peace of mind.

ABOVE RIGHT: The Three Star level is the best you can get.

Each level of preparation is clearly marked on the side of the vehicle's cab with MAN's seal of quality, reflecting the "star value".

"Customers are seeing the benefits of owning a used MAN – such as excellent value for money," says Fourie.

"MAN vehicles are often sold into their first economic life with a repair and maintenance agreement and a guaranteed end-of-term residual value. MAN Own Retail and MAN Private Capital Dealers take care of these rolling assets throughout their life, ensuring that their use is optimised for the duration for which they were purchased," Fourie adds.

"The MAN international vehicle return process ensures that the vehicles return to the TopUsed division in the condition required, due to an additional independent check undertaken on the quality standard of that vehicle.

TELEMATICS TECHNOLOGY

driving the transport industry's future

The fleet management industry in South Africa has come a long way since the use of paper-based tachographs. Telematics technology has changed the way fleet management companies do business and experts believe it is changing the face of transport and logistics as we know it. ANLERIE DE WET finds out more

Shaun Brashaw, chief technology officer at Altech Netstar, says: "Fleet telematics is one of the critical pillars in a very complicated and specialised ecosystem. It will be one of the catalysts for supplying critical data to this ecosystem in real time for many years to come."

Hein Jordt, MD at Ctrack Fleet Management Solutions, says fleet owners are relying increasingly on telematics to assess all aspects of the use of vehicles and the behaviour of drivers.

"Telematics companies provide the ideal platform for the integration with original equipment manufacturers, which are currently investing funds into development of driverless vehicles and trucks," says Jordt.

Brashaw says: "We see more and more customers looking at telematics as a small component of a much larger and more complex ecosystem. This trend is becoming increasingly popular with logistics operators as they start seeing real and tangible benefits of a singular view of their entire ecosystem in as close to real time as possible."

Justin Manson, business development manager at TomTom South Africa, says: "Telematics technology is without a doubt the way of the future for transport and logistics, especially with the advancements that are being made in the industry.

"Clients no longer want to see only where their vehicles are and how they are being driven. They also want a telematics system that talks to their back-office systems, or offers them a platform where

they can start collecting electronic proof of delivery, thereby shortening the time it takes to bill clients and improving cash flow," says Manson.

Grant Fraser, product and marketing director at MiX Telematics Africa, says: "The benefits of effective mobile asset management are tangible and provide sustainable improvements.



Clients are starting to use the savings from telematics to incentivise drivers, and I think we will see a lot more clients going this route.



"Telematics helps fleets reduce costs and increase business efficiency, directly contributing to the overall profitability of businesses by optimising their fleet operating budget. It remains one of the most important tools fleet managers can use to improve the safety of their fleet."

Telematics technology has become very popular in South Africa over the past few years. "South Africa is one of the more mature markets when it comes to fleet telematics. We also have one of the highest market penetration rates, which is expected to be at around 25 percent in 2017," says Manson.

Jordt says: "The market for telematics in South

Africa is almost saturated. Telematics is required by most insurance companies as a prerequisite for cover. Currently these telematics services are directed to the benefit the insurer, which benefits the truck owner in terms of lower premiums."

He explains that a total telematics solution creates management tools, which Ctrack views as beneficial in terms of asset and cost management, productivity and utilisation, as well as risk management.

Manson adds: "Another benefit is that accurate data can be collected from the vehicle and does not have to be re-captured. TomTom can provide the information that its customers need, which would then automatically populate their existing systems."



Manson and Jordt both predict that telematics technology is set to grow in South Africa this year. Jordt says the industry is abuzz about big data (extremely large data sets that may be analysed computationally to reveal patterns, trends, and associations, especially relating to human behaviour and interactions) and everything being interconnected.

"The drive towards integrated and paperless solutions will accelerate during 2017. Another area that we think will pick up momentum is that of driver incentives. Clients are starting to use the savings from telematics to incentivise drivers, and I think we will see a lot more clients going this route," says Manson.

Fraser says his company believes that telematics technology will continue to be invaluable for the transport and logistics industry. "Continuous innovation by the leading telematics industry players will drive service-based offerings that benefit the market and bring further cost savings for operators in 2017 and beyond," he concludes. **F**

From motor man to TRACTOR MAN!



One of South Africa's most well-known motor men is now cutting his teeth in the tractor game. Piet Rademeyer, the man who brought the Land Rover brand to South Africa many years ago, is now heading up a new company called Vukani Agri

The tractor business is very, very different from the automotive game. No one really gives a hoot what a tractor looks like, for instance. The business transaction is also completely different – farmers never buy a tractor using hire purchase.

It's clear, however, that Piet Rademeyer, chief executive officer of Vukani Agri (vukani means "wake up" in isiXhosa), is in his element – because, after all, he loves things with wheels. He also loves learning and, as a newcomer to the world of tractors, he's learning each and every day.

He also doesn't like the idea of being retired. "I've tried retirement three times, and it just doesn't work for me," he notes with a chuckle. "As such, I am looking forward to building a new business, which was exactly what I did with Land Rover. It's actually about more than establishing and building a business; this is also about building a culture," he observes.

While he is not new to the concept of building a new business and a new culture, Rademeyer concedes that the tractor game is quite unique. "This business is so different to the automotive game," he reveals. "We obviously want to achieve similar success to that of the Land Rover brand ... but it's not going to be a walk in the park."

Naturally, when Rademeyer introduced the Land Rover brand to South Africans, that was a tall ask, too

– but he grew the business from an annual volume of six to 4 235 units! So, how is he planning to follow suit in the tractor business? While there are many differences to the automotive sector, there are some common traits, too – and Rademeyer will continue to apply the lessons he learnt during his stint with Land Rover.

First and foremost, the quality of the product is vital. "You will never succeed if you sell rubbish. As such, I wanted to ensure that I was selling a product that epitomised quality. It was also important to me that the manufacturer had a strong focus on research and development," Rademeyer explains.

When he was offered the opportunity to sell Farmtrac tractors, he immediately packed his bags and headed for India, where the tractors are produced. "They are made by a company called Escorts Agri Machinery, which is the third-largest tractor, accessories and implements manufacturer in India.

"The company has already enjoyed considerable success on this continent; it has sold 1 430 tractors in Tanzania, and is looking at expanding to Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The company has sold 700 units in Burkina Faso, 400 in Madagascar, 1 000 in Nigeria and approximately 600 to South African farmers to date. So, I knew that it had a solid track record – but I still needed to go there to see the business first-hand."

Rademeyer was impressed with what he saw. "To be perfectly frank, I was not expecting anything particularly remarkable, but I was really impressed! The company's quality control is exemplary. In between every stage of the tractor's assembly in the factory, there is a quality station, ensuring that every product leaves the factory in accordance with stipulated quality levels.

"The factory does not just have impressive facilities, but also specialised tractors such as a Porsche-designed model and a tractor called the 'Queen', which has been designed specifically for women!" Rademeyer reveals.

Another facet of Escorts Agri Machinery's business that impressed Rademeyer was the testing laboratories. "These labs test tractors for any defaults and examine the design of every product with a fine-tooth comb. In total, the tractors undergo a 48-hour continuous driving test, as well as several other meticulous quality measures. These combine to create an incredibly high standard of quality," he notes.

Furthermore, he was delighted to learn that the company has a strong focus on research and development. "This means that future products will be both innovative and exciting," he comments.

Next up was much discussion around pricing. "I am delighted to report that our products, despite being of a high quality level, are up to 40-percent cheaper than some of the rival products. So, we are really competitive in the local market."

Now Rademeyer is establishing a dealer network. "We want to build a dedicated dealer network across the country. Three dealers have already been appointed, with a target of eight more in the near future and a final target of 38. These will be strategically placed around the country to provide customers with comprehensive coverage, no matter where they may be," he explains.

He is determined to offer exceptional after-sales service via the dealer network. "The salesman sells the first vehicle, but it is the technical guys who will bring in the repeat business. As such, we are investing heavily in after-sales service and technical support by bringing out two service engineers from India, who will train a further 36 tractor technicians. This will equip them with all the knowledge and expertise that they need in order to keep the fleets of tractors running in optimum condition," Rademeyer asserts.

Of course, he knows that there will be challenges along the way. "Financing is one of the big challenges,"

he says. "Financing these tractors is completely different from financing a car, for example. It's very difficult for farmers to get finance. Tractors are generally sold through co-ops and are not financed individually. Typically, it is a cash deal; 50 percent is paid up front and the balance is paid after the harvest," Rademeyer comments.

Going forward, he is also thinking of opening a small local manufacturing plant. "Currently there is no duty on the importation of tractors into South Africa and so, without some import protection from the government, it is very hard to build them more cheaply in South Africa. This could change, however. If it does, the plant could certainly become a reality.

"In addition to establishing a tractor assembly facility, we would also like to set up a training centre for technicians, engineers, assembly managers and workers. A parts and component localisation programme would obviously follow. We would like to assist with the training and development of farmers," Rademeyer says.

Whatever the future holds, Rademeyer says he wants to help South African farmers and provide them with access to superb products backed up by world-class after-sales support. "Nurturing agriculture is vital to the future success of South Africa and we are very excited and proud to be appointed as importer and distributor for such a well-established brand," he concludes. **F**

ABOVE RIGHT: Rademeyer believes that Farmtrac tractors can uplift farmers in this country.

And so the deal was done. Rademeyer signed on the dotted line and committed to making Farmtrac tractors a household name in South Africa. The first step was selecting an appropriate product range.

"We have a wide range of new products, which includes the Farmtrac 6050 (37 kW), 6060 (45 kW) and 6075 (56 kW). We are launching the 6075 PRO at Nampo and 60 and 67 kW units will follow. The Heritage Series tractors have arrived in South Africa and we are offering these at very special launch prices. There is also an exciting and specialised new product in the works, which is going to be an orchard-based product designed specifically for the wine farmers and fruit growers in South Africa," Rademeyer reveals.



NAMPO 2017:

Harvest Day excitement building



Nampo 2017 is all set to be the best to date, the organisers report

Nampo Harvest Day is the country's largest agricultural expo. It has a rich and successful history with the first event being held in 1967. Wim Venter, admin officer at Grain SA, has attended the exhibition an incredible 16 times. He gave **FOCUS** some of his predictions for Nampo 2017...

Farmers, agricultural businesses, manufacturers and industry innovators are set to gather at the event and show off their latest products, designs and ideas.

This year, Nampo is set to build upon the event's success. In total, the attendance at Nampo is expected to reach up to 80 000 people over four days. Grain SA has secured the support of more than 700 exhibitors.

The show continues to attract international attention with exhibitors from Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), Russia and India. This year, for the first time there will be a Canadian pavilion. The regular international exhibitors from countries such as Argentina, Israel, France, America and Italy will also be present.

Speaking on the progress that has been made over the last decade, Venter explains that he doesn't see the 2017 event as necessarily being bigger, but rather better with more accommodation, better regulations and more parking.

"The strict rules of the event are part of its success, but this year I want to follow a more 'open-door' approach," says Venter.

"The Harvest Day committee makes the rules and sets the policies. Members of the committee have years of knowledge and experience with Nampo. They are also my key personnel who work the week before and during Nampo," explains Dirk Strydom, manager of grain economy and marketing at Grain SA.

The theme of the exhibition this year is "Unfold the Future". According to Strydom, the theme reflects Grain SA's desire to ensure Nampo Harvest Day is the best platform and marketplace to provide the agricultural industry with innovation, technology and information.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

In terms of new and exciting features and products, the existing 4x4 track will be upgraded this year, and there are plans for a new track for quads and "side-by-sides".

The tent-hotel will be moved closer to the area in which the highly anticipated crowd-favourite plough competition is held. This development will be supported by a new ablution block, specifically built to service the tent-hotel and surrounding area.

This year, the youth show will take place in the mornings at the cattle/horse arena. More exhibits are being developed, which will be placed around the main entrance and the memorial wall. Extensions are also being made to the sites around the seed plots.

There will once again be a programme for women in a tent close to the tea garden and there are several more exhibits aimed at women in the industry.

Toit Wessels, assistant manager: marketing and Nampo, says: "There is a substantial need for the women's programme, as wives and daughters accompany their husbands and fathers to Nampo for the day. The women's programme is available only in the morning from 09:30 to 13:00, after which they can visit the exhibitions and the tea garden."

CHALLENGES

Planning an event the size of Nampo brings many challenges. According to Wessels, the first of these is providing accommodation close to Nampo Park. Due to the sheer size of the show, a minimum of two days is needed to visit all the exhibits. The accommodation surrounding Nampo Park is sparse and, therefore, the planning committee decided on the tent-hotel idea.

There have also been challenges in terms of sponsorship, especially in the current economic climate. Despite these, Wessels says he's looking forward to the event. **F**

Showing some REAL FAITH

Scania South Africa has a way of “becoming family” with its clients. For up-and-coming operator Tradevest Logistics, Scania is certainly helping it achieve some lofty goals

Lise van der Berg, MD at Tradevest Logistics, is a woman strutting her stuff in a man's industry. She first entered the transport industry in 2000 and launched her current company, Tradevest Logistics, in July 2015.

It's not been an easy road, though, and Van der Berg couldn't have started her company without the help from Morne Munz and David Wiid from Scania Cape Town.

“No financial institutions were interested in financing an upcoming business (and it's also extremely difficult for a female-run business),” she explains.

“All the parties at Scania looked at my business from a different angle and believed in me. They looked at my CV, my background and my achievements and they gave me a chance – and I'm so grateful for it! It also helps that Scania offers its own in-house finance,” Van der Berg says.



“Scania was the only company interested in supporting my business. We negotiated a deal and my first two Scania G460 trucks were delivered in April 2016.”

Although Van der Berg had some experience with running a couple of Scania's for four years in her previous business (which, she says, made the brand one of her top choices for the new venture) it was thanks to this faith in her business that Scania eventually became family.

As Tradevest Logistics grew, it moved to offices in Somerset West and, in February, another two G460 Scania's were added to the fleet. Van der Berg says that any new large truck she buys will be a Scania.

“Because of the company's openness and approach to human relations – such as the empathy shown towards its customers – we became family. It would be very difficult for me to move to another brand.



“For example, one of our vehicles had an accident in December and Scania suspended my service maintenance contract for a couple of months while the vehicle was being repaired, which saved me money. Whenever I need information, or have a problem, I can call, day or night. Spares are always available and aftersales service is excellent,” Van der Berg gloats.

As Van der Berg plans to expand the business into the citrus (it also works with cape fruit distributors), timber and fertiliser sectors, as well as consolidated freight, she is mindful of the challenges faced by women in the transport industry.

“The industry is very tough, and for a woman it's challenging,” she says, offering advice to other women interested in transport. “The most important thing is to be knowledgeable – learning from and about the industry allows you to talk from an informed perspective. It's matter of staying on top of things and being ahead.

“Having good human relations is the most important aspect of the business; the rest will follow,” she advises.

And that epitomises Van der Berg's relationship with Scania. **F**



JARLATH SWEENEY, from the Irish magazine *Fleet Transport*, attends the Fuel Choices Initiative Summit and reports that Israel's future looks to be green

“W

e are changing the world; the monopoly of crude oil will end. We are creating a cleaner, greener world.

Our vision is becoming a reality and we will continue to innovate and create cutting-edge technology, which is the secret to our success,” stated Israel's prime minister on a video link to the fourth annual Fuel Choices Summit in Tel-Aviv.

Established in 2011, the Fuel Choices Initiative is Israel's programme for alternative fuels and smart mobility. Ten government agencies are involved: Energy, Transport, Economy, Finance, Environmental Protection, Science, Defence, Agriculture, Foreign Affairs and the prime minister's office, which heads up the project.

In the five years marking the halfway point of the programme, significant progress has been achieved with the fostering and integration of the local ecosystem increasing enormously, according to Eyal Rosner, chairman and administration director of the Fuel Choices Initiative at the prime minister's office.

“In 2011, there were 45 research groups and 60 companies involved, and ₪1 000 million (Israeli shekel) was allocated towards capital investment. So far this year, these figures have increased to 220 research groups and 500 companies with the cumulative investment reaching ₪8 000 million.

“Oil usage across the board is massive and

growing. As an energy source for transportation, it has almost a monopoly,” said Rosner. “We aspire to live in a world free from dependence on crude oil, with a wide variety of accessible, clean means of transportation.”

As the aim is to reduce dependency on oil, there is a focus on further researching the development of viable alternatives such as electricity and synthetic and bio-fuels.

Another objective of the initiative is to progress technologies forward assisted by the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) involved in autonomous and connected vehicles. The seamless journey of users is the main focus. All these elements were explored and discussed at the Fuel Choices Summit 2016 held at the Habima Theater, Tel-Aviv.

Israel is becoming the centre of knowledge and industry in the field of alternative fuels and smart transportation. However, its ultimate goal is to reduce the country's oil usage in transport by 60 percent by 2025, while supporting green initiatives and raising global awareness.

Different segments need different solutions and the government is aware of the need to build infrastructure that supports the reduction of oil consumption, and to put the proper structures and incentives in place.

There is a special focus on sectors that depend the most on oil – such as trucks, buses and taxis – which collectively contribute to over 40 percent of oil usage.

Natural gas seems to be the most viable solution for trucks and buses, with methanol being an option for cars, following a significant breakthrough from a collaborative project involving Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA), DOR Chemicals and the Fuel Choices Initiative.

FCA's sister company, CNH Industrial, is assisting with the implementation of infrastructure to service its range of trucks and buses powered by compressed natural gas (CNG).

The Standard Institute of Israel has set a new regulation for use of methanol, which prescribes a mixture of 85 percent petrol and 15 percent methanol. A Fiat 500, which has been adapted to run on this fuel mix, was revealed to the public at the Summit.

CNH Industrial's commitment to vehicles that are run on natural gas is well known through its brands Iveco, Iveco Bus and Heuliez Bus. It is the recognised leader in the development, manufacture and distribution of vehicles powered by CNG, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and biomethane.

CNG combustion emissions create less pollution than petrol and diesel, and the engines are less noisy, too. Over the past 25 years, CNH Industrial companies sold more than 32 000 CNG-powered engines for both on- and off-road markets.

Last year alone, more than 900 natural gas Iveco trucks and Iveco Buses were delivered to customers around Europe. Twenty-five percent of these units were installed on low-floor city buses.

The new partnership with the Israel Fuel Choices campaign has begun with the first ever natural-gas-powered truck being put into operation. The truck was an Iveco Stralis 4x2 tractor unit deployed by the Fridenson Group, one of the country's largest transport companies.

A trip to the headquarters in Haifa was organised in order for us to see the new truck and speak to its driver, who said that he loves driving the truck and that he can get about 400 km on one full tank.

The CNG-powered truck has generated great interest among the transport industry. It is envisaged that Fridenson will invest in the latest Stralis NP, which provides additional power and distance. In addition, Super Gas, a major supplier of natural gas to the industry in Israel, uses a CNG-powered Iveco Daily to transport its gas bottles to customers.

According to Clement Chandon, who heads up heavy line gas business development at Iveco, natural gas represents a bridge from renewable sources such as biomethane to gas. "In this context, CNH Industrial's agricultural machinery brand, New Holland Agriculture, is currently testing its T6.140 Methane Power tractor.

"This second-generation prototype represents a key step towards the Energy Independent Farm concept, which focuses on the ability of farms to produce energy from natural sources – in this case biomass – which, in turn, will power the machines and the farm itself. This is another future concept that could successfully be applied in many agricultural scenarios around the world, including the Israeli farming sector."



Chandon explained that his current work is expanding the specification and configuration types of the Stralis NP, which runs on compressed and liquefied natural gas (LNG).

The 4x2 tractor will soon be joined by a 4x2 low-cab rigid for car and truck transportation (with De Rooy, NL). Featuring the latest FPT Industrial Cursor 9 natural-power Euro-6 engine, the LNG-only version has recorded a range distance of 1 500 km, which makes it suitable for long-haul operations.

The Stralis NP was honoured at the Fleet Transport Awards with the title: "Irish Green Commercial of the Year 2017".

A major French supermarket wishes to invest in an urban delivery truck, which is the next exciting development to hit the market. It will be based on a rigid version of the Stralis and will run on biomethane.

Chandon is targeting the main markets in Europe that already have a refuelling infrastructure in place such as Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Poland and Italy, which is the biggest market in Europe. By the end of 2017, Iveco plans to sell 2 000 units – double that of its 2016 figure. **F**

As regular readers of **FOCUS** know, this magazine has been appointed an associate member of the International Truck of the Year (IToY)! **FOCUS** is the sole South African magazine to have joined this prestigious body. One of the advantages of this association is access to exclusive articles, specially written for **FOCUS** by ITOY jury members. This is one such article.



Heading the AUTOMATED RACE



Australian mining companies are embracing automation despite its challenges. MARISKA MORRIS learns more about the automated mining industry and what it will mean for Australia

There is an international push towards automated vehicles – an industry that Australian Premier Jay Weatherill believes will be worth AU\$ 90 billion (R896 billion) by 2030. Australian mining companies seem to be well ahead of the crowd as automated trucks (the massive, open-cast-mine type) have been running in the country's mines since as early as 2012.

Rio Tinto, a mining company situated in West Australia, runs a completely automated mine with self-driving trucks and automated drilling, for example. The 69 automated trucks, which transport ore at the Pilbara mine, are run from a control centre in Perth, 1 280 km away from the mine.

"Implementing autonomous haulage means more material can be moved efficiently and safely, which creates a direct increase in productivity," the company states on its website.

These trucks use precision GPS for navigation as well as radar and laser sensors to avoid obstacles. *MIT Technology Review* quotes Rob Atkinson, leader of productivity efforts at the mine, who states that driverless trucks are around 15-percent cheaper and more productive as the software doesn't need to take a break.

"All those places where you could lose a few seconds or minutes by not being consistent add up," Atkinson says in the article.

Rio Tinto's rival, BHP Billiton, is also looking towards automation. BHP Billiton completed a pilot project with Caterpillar driverless trucks in New Mexico in 2013 and extended the trial for 12 hauler trucks to be used at its Jumblebar iron-ore mine in Pilbara.

While automation might increase productivity and reduce expenses, it also means a loss of jobs. Aaron Cosbey, development economist and senior associate at the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) in Winnipeg, Canada, and his co-authors, estimate that automation will replace between 30 and 75 percent of the mining workforce.

In their report, titled *Mining a Mirage*, Cosbey states that jobs in drilling, blasting and train or truck driving will be affected the most. These positions typically make up 70 percent of employment in mines. He also notes that automation will reach its peak in the next ten to 15 years, which means job losses will increase. For developing countries, job losses aren't the only concern.

In his article for *The Guardian*, journalist Oliver Balch notes that resource-rich, developing countries will be affected the most by automation, "with national gross domestic product potentially reducing by as much as



four percent in some cases". This has led to a debate on whether mining policies need to be adjusted.

Howard Mann, senior adviser at the IISD, notes there needs to be a change to the division of wealth in mining. Balch quotes him as saying: "The mining sector model is almost a colonial model. The mining companies own the resources, they own the land and they own all the benefits of harvesting the resources."

Mann suggests state-owned companies should play a greater role in mining along with "tighter profit-sharing agreements and more service-oriented concessions".

Not everyone agrees. Aidan Davy, COO at the International Council for Mining and Metals in Australia, says the redeployment of jobs in mining is just as likely as the loss of jobs. He also comments that automation will not be rolled out universally, as the uptake will depend on local issues such as mineral types and availability of skills.

Despite the debates and some objections to automation in the mining industry, it is inevitable in Australia, especially considering the shortage of truck drivers in the country.

A survey found that one in five Australian truck drivers is at retirement age with the average age of a truck driver being 47, reports Adam Carey,

transport journalist for the Australian newspaper *The Age*. According to Carey's article, projections show the amount of freight required to be moved by truck in Australia will double between 2010 and 2030.

The Australian Department of Transport also estimates that a 150-percent increase in recruitment is needed to meet the growing demand. This is not possible with the current lack of drivers. Mining companies are thus looking to self-driving trucks to meet the necessary demands.

In their 2012 report, titled: *Autonomous and Remote Operation Technologies in the Mining Industry*, managing director at BAEconomics (BAE), Brian Fisher, and associate Sabine Schnittger, note: "The need to attract new employees, including women, in an environment where skilled labour is in short supply, will further reinforce the trend toward automation, which places workers in a safe environment close to their communities."

Fisher and Schnittger add that automation increases the safety of the workforce by taking workers away from the isolation of the mine, to the city where they are close to all necessary amenities. To remain in the mining industry, however, traditional craftsmen will need new qualifications and knowledge, which poses its own challenges. **F**

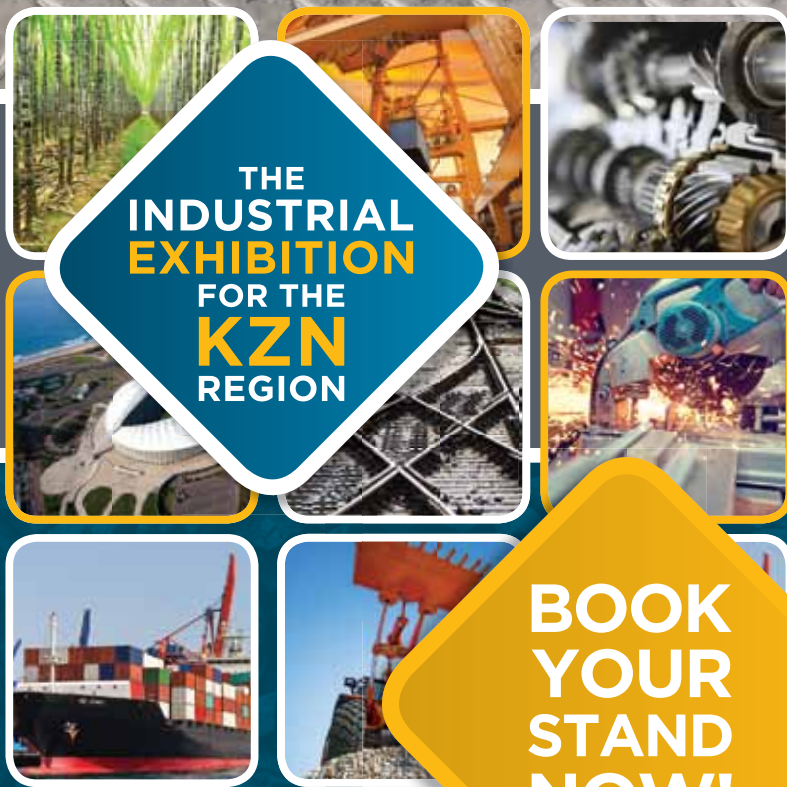


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GLOBAL FOCUS NEWS

-15°C IN A BLACK CAB

London's iconic black cabs are entering a new era. Yip, you guessed it – the electric era.

The London Taxi Company (LTC) is exerting its all-new electric black cab to the most comprehensive product-quality programme in its 98-year history; currently underway in the lower reaches of the Arctic Circle in Norway.

This cold-climate testing is just part of the new programme LTC has developed to ensure the highest levels of quality, reliability and usability for demanding taxi usage cycles.

Extreme cold-weather testing is undertaken to guarantee the performance of the battery. It is also used to check the quality of driver and passenger experience in cold weather – including cab heating and ventilation. The impact of grip, drivability and visibility are also checked.

The next step is to park the new cab in giant fridges at -49°C to guarantee that the vehicle will always start, even after the coldest nights. Then it's off for similar endurance testing in extreme heat environments before it is deemed ready for sale.

Quality director Wolfram Liedtke explains: "Our new taxi is being developed with two key engineering principles – quality and endurance – to meet the needs of the demanding taxi duty cycle.

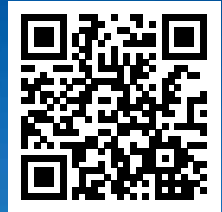
"We understand drivers will want to be sure that our range-extended electric vehicle technology works in all conditions, which is why we went to the effort of testing in these extreme environments. In the history of London's taxi industry, it will, without doubt, be the most resilient and highest-quality product yet."

Worldwide, this will be the first dedicated taxi, which is capable of zero emissions, to enter series production. It will launch in the fourth quarter of 2017.

HOT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

With the help of engineering simulation and virtual reality technology, CNH Industrial's design analysis and simulation team is able to reduce the number of physical prototypes that need to be built before a final product is produced.

The days of crash test dummies and costly physical prototypes are becoming a distant memory ... go behind the scenes with CNH Industrial's Behind the Wheel web series to see how two central teams in Italy and the United States simulate crashworthiness, safety, soil and crop modelling, ergonomics and vehicle dynamics.

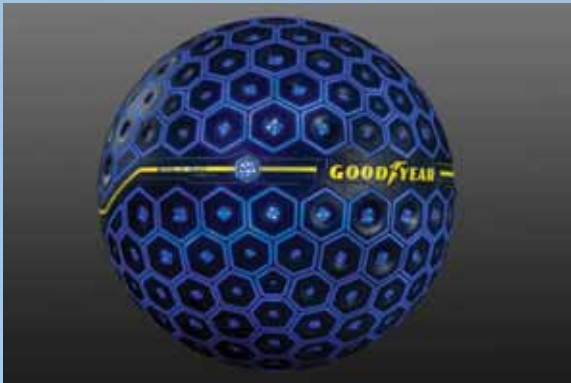


Scan the QR code to watch the episode now.



A TYRE LIKE NEVER BEFORE

"The tyre of the future will be able to sense, decide, transform and interact..."



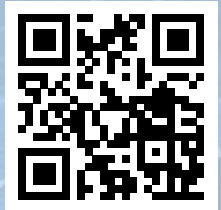
That's according to Goodyear, which has unveiled its Eagle 360 Urban, a concept tyre powered by artificial intelligence.

"A revolution will take place at the intersection of autonomy, mobility and connectivity. As this unfolds, tyre technology will be even more important than it is today. To safely navigate their surroundings, the autonomous vehicles of the future will need to learn to cope with the millions of possible unknowns we face in everyday driving scenarios. To do this they will need access to data and the ability to learn and adapt," says Jean-Claude Kihn, president of Goodyear Europe, Middle East and Africa.

Goodyear's Eagle 360 Urban features a bionic super-elastic polymer skin with a sensor network that allows the concept tyre to check on its own status and gather information on its environment, including the road surface.

Via connectivity with other vehicles, as well as with infrastructure, traffic and mobility management systems, the Eagle 360 Urban also captures information on its surroundings in real time.

Intrigued? Scan this QR code to watch a video that will reshape any ideas you have about what a tyre could possibly do...



TRANSPORTER TURNS 70

Fans of the VW Transporter will celebrate its 70-year heritage with a special edition version.

Around 70 years ago, Dutch VW importer Ben Pon visited the VW plant in Wolfsburg and came across a curious vehicle – the "Plattenwagen". He subsequently made a sketch in his notebook of a vehicle type that did not exist at that time, anywhere in the world. His sketch became the launch pad for the Volkswagen Transporter, which would go on to sell in the millions.

In commemoration, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles has unveiled a "70 Years of the Bulli" special edition.

Optionally available in two-tone paintwork of Candy White and Metallic Kurkuma Yellow, the "Bulli" badges and anniversary sticker on the rear window point to the vehicle's lineage.

Chrome trim abounds, contrasting the matt-black decals around the B-pillars and tinted windows. Tread plates feature "Bulli" lettering and stainless-steel inserts and the loading edge covers of the rear hatch are also stainless steel.

The popular 18-inch "disc" wheels are available in the classic look with white rims, or alternatively in classic silver.

It's suitably retro inside as well: deluxe lighting cleverly shows off the modified "Visitamo" seat covers, which, in turn, are stylistically coordinated with the refined look of the "dark wood" floor covering.

Alas, so far it'll be available to order only in Germany.



TO BE THE BEST IN TOWN

To the casual observer, the Hino Pomona dealership will seem brand new – but to those in the know, every face inside the branch will be familiar. That's because this Imperial Group dealer has moved from Germiston.

"We see Hino Pomona as a new business situated in an industrial area that is rapidly growing in importance as more logistics warehouses are built there," explains Mike Darroll, dealer principal of Hino Pomona.

The premises – located alongside the R21 highway near OR Tambo Airport – received an investment of almost R2 million for the upgrading of the facility. There are ten work bays and the height of the service centre has been increased to suit the taller modern trucks and trailers. A brake roller tester and diagnostics tester have been brought across from the Germiston facility.

A parts department, manned by seven staff, holds a substantial number of replacement and service parts. The service department is manned by 12 staff, and an important offering by Hino Pomona is 24-hour servicing. The dealer also offers a mobile workshop, which can service trucks at the customer's premises. Current throughput in the workshop is up to 16 trucks a day.

Ernie Trautmann, vice president of Hino South Africa, says that the new location opens great opportunities for the dealership to grow its customer base. "The challenge is for Mike Darroll and his team to win the Hino Dealer of the Year trophy within the next three years," Trautmann smiles.

"Hino Pomona is a strategic dealership providing Hino Total Support to customers, as Hino aims to increase its product range in the future and become an even bigger player in the local truck market," Trautmann adds.

Managing director of the commercial vehicle division of Imperial Auto, Gert Koekemoer, emphasises the importance of always putting the customer first. "Customers who are not happy with the service they receive at Hino Pomona must contact me directly. We aim to run the best truck dealers in town," he concludes.



BP ULTIMATE REALLY IS THE ULTIMATE

BP Ultimate with ACTIVE Technology has been named "Product of the Year" 2017 in the fuel category, by Product of the Year South Africa, a global organisation that recognises product innovation in the consumer market.

The consumer survey research process in the fuel category has been conducted in South Africa over the last nine years and globally over 30 years. The winning products for 2017 were selected through the votes by more than 5 000 consumer households, in a nationally representative face-to-face survey.



"BP is proud to receive such a prestigious award hardly a year since the introduction of our best-ever fuel into the South African market. This recognition reinforces our commitment to innovation and technical excellence that will enhance the driver experience while he or she enjoys more kilometres per tank," says BP South Africa's head of marketing, Tebogo Mekoa.

BP Ultimate with ACTIVE technology has been designed to complement the very latest, high-spec engine technologies and benefit older vehicles. Active molecules in the fuel coat existing dirt, enabling it to be dragged away from critical engine components, and also form a protective barrier against dirt to help prevent future build-up.

More than 80 different test methods have shown that the fuels start working to fight the effects of dirt when an engine is started, and with ongoing use help deliver a smoother drive, reduce the risk of unplanned maintenance and deliver more kilometres per tank. Gains of up to 56 km are claimed when using new BP Ultimate Diesel, for example.

COMMERCIAL VEHICLE SALES REPORT FOR FEBRUARY 2017

Note: For the time being, Great Wall Motors SA (GWMSA) and Mercedes-Benz SA (MBSA) will only report aggregated sales data. The GWMSA and MBSA commercial vehicle market split volumes are estimates based on historical trends and forecasting techniques. No GWMSA figures were disclosed for February. Associated Motor Holdings (AMH) and Amalgamated Automobile Distributors (AAD) are now Motus Corporation, and continues to disclose aggregated figures.

Light Commercial Vehicles < 3 501 kg	Total: 14 416
Fiat Group	51
Ford Motor Company	3 017
GMSA	1 905
Jaguar Land Rover	13
JMC	17
Mahindra	197
Mazda South Africa	62
Mitsubishi	66
Mercedes-Benz SA – estimate	15
Motus Corporation	538
Nissan	3 197
Renault	1
Suzuki Auto	15
Tata	73
Toyota	4 802
Volkswagen SA	447

Medium Commercial Vehicles 3 501 – 8 500 kg	Total: 705
Fiat Group	2
Ford Motor Company	1
GMSA	135
Iveco	46
JMC	12
Mercedes-Benz SA – estimate	188
Motus Corporation	6
Tata	40
Toyota	176
Volkswagen SA	99

Heavy Commercial Vehicles 8 501 – 16 500 kg	Total: 490
FAW	68
GMSA	129
Iveco	32
MAN	13
Mercedes-Benz SA – estimate	53
Tata	23
Toyota	97
Volvo Group Southern Africa	75

Extra-Heavy Commercial Vehicles > 16 500 kg	Total: 1 028
Babcock DAF	17
FAW	43
GMSA	25
Iveco	22
MAN	122
Mercedes-Benz SA – estimate	329
Powerstar	25
Scania	135
Tata	3
Toyota	30
Volvo Group Southern Africa	277

Buses > 8 500 kg	Total: 74
MAN	36
Mercedes-Benz SA – estimate	23
Scania	7
Tata	4
Volvo Group Southern Africa	4

*Source: National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa (Naamsa).

IVECO AWARDED FOR SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

Iveco has won two of the three inaugural Sustainable Truck of the Year 2017 awards.

The only brand to boast three finalists in the three award categories, the Iveco New Daily Electric won this prestigious accolade in the van category, while the Eurocargo CNG took honours in the distribution category.



Pierre Lahutte, Iveco brand president, and Fabio Pellegri-nelli, gas business development Iveco Italy, accept the awards from Maurizio Cervetto, chief editor of *Vado e Torno*.

The award, sponsored by the magazine *Vado e Torno*, in collaboration with Lifegate, was conferred during Transpotec 2017, the Transport and Logistics Trade Fair, held in Verona, Italy.

Pierre Lahutte, Iveco brand president, says: "The commitment to sustainability is a consolidated reality for Iveco and is based on technological excellence. Today we are the only manufacturer to have a full range of vehicles powered by natural gas, all the way up from light to heavy vehicles and also buses."

INVESTING IN THE TECHNICIANS OF TOMORROW

Iveco and engine manufacturer Fiat Powertrain Technologies (FPT) – both divisions of CNH Industrial – have launched the second TechPro² programme in partnership with Don Bosco Educational Projects in Ennerdale, Johannesburg. The programme trains local youth as technicians and has now received a new workshop and engines sponsored by CNH Industrial.

Ten students are participating in this programme, which provides technical training to participants and will run for a year. After completing the course, students are presented with an officially recognised diploma. Students come from across the country to join the programme, although most are from the Ennerdale area.

"This is one of Iveco South Africa's most important sustainability projects. It also creates a pool of talent for Iveco," says Daniela Ropolo, EMEA sustainable development initiatives manager at Iveco.

The programme was launched in 2012 with six students, who all graduated in June 2016 and were placed in internships to complete their practical work experience, which forms part of the course. Five were employed at Iveco.

While students pay a small fee for the training,

most of the cost is subsidised by CNH Industrial, FPT and Iveco.

CNH Industrial also educates instructors who will then train the students. It provides manuals and booklets, as well as uniforms for the students to wear when at work.

"We are in the business of training people, not only professionals," says Ropolo. The company spent US\$ 860 million (R10 billion) on training and



ABOVE LEFT: Daniela Ropolo, EMEA sustainable development initiatives manager at Iveco, and Marco Piazza, sales manager for Africa and the Middle East at FPT Industrial, welcome the new students to the TechPro² programme.

research programmes in 2016. Training programmes such as TechPro² received US\$ 4,8 million (R60 million) in 2016.

Similar TechPro² programmes are run in countries across the globe including Argentina, Brazil, India, Italy and Poland.

Marco Piazza, sales manager at FPT, says: "We are proud to be a sponsor and hope to sponsor programmes such as this in other places in the future."

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AN OIL FOR THE FUTURE

From keeping a truck running today to maintaining efficiency into the future: Shell Rimula R4 L makes it possible

Truck operators need to know that the oil they buy will protect their truck's engine under all conditions. No matter how hot, cold, steep, dusty, muddy or extended the operations, operators should demand the best protection. Shell Lubricants' range of high-performance greases and oils can help to reduce energy consumption and emissions, and increase availability of equipment.

ACID AND CORROSION CONTROL

Shell Rimula R4 L has demonstrated excellent acid and corrosion control. In the high-temperature corrosion bench test (ASTM D6594), the lubricant displayed up to 97-percent less lead corrosion than the API CJ-4 limit and a 95-percent improvement over Shell Rimula R3 MV.

PROTECTIVE POWER

Using innovative technology, Shell Rimula R4 L has been specially designed for demanding applications in mining and quarrying. It provides excellent protection against wear and corrosion and its low-sulphated ash, phosphorus and sulphur (SAPS) formulation protects the exhaust system catalysts and filters used on the latest vehicles.

In a real-world field test, Shell Rimula R4 L demonstrated its ability to protect bearing metals from corrosion wear. After the engine oil was changed from a general API CJ-4 oil, to Shell Rimula R4 L, the trucks showed a significantly reduced level of lead corrosion.

DYNAMIC PROTECTION

Shell Rimula R4 L heavy-duty diesel engine oil is formulated with adaptive additive technology that

adapts physically and chemically to engines to provide dynamic protection in three key engine performance areas:

- It fights acids from fuel combustion that can cause corrosion and wear;
- It helps to control deposits and dirt in all parts of the engine;
- It helps to control wear through maintaining strongly protective oil films to help keep critical engine components working.

WEAR CONTROL

Shell Rimula R4 L has demonstrated strong wear-protection performance with up to 42-percent less tappet wear than the API CJ-4 limit. Tests also prove up to 30-percent less wear on the top ring and 34-percent less wear on injector adjusting screws than API CJ-4 limit.

DEPOSIT CONTROL

Up to 70-percent better than the API CJ-4 limit, Shell Rimula R4 L has demonstrated strong resistance to carbon build up (deposits) during various API CJ-4 and ACEA E9 category engine tests.

EMISSION CONTROL

Protecting the performance of a truck's exhaust emissions control systems is important to enable vehicles to comply with legislative requirements and to support efficient operations. For instance, blocked diesel particulate filters can actually increase fuel consumption. Shell Rimula R4 L is formulated with reduced levels of ash and sulphur to help maintain the efficiency of the latest and future vehicle technologies. **F**





A case for **MINIBUS TAXIS**

In the second part of our four-part series on public transport in Cape Town, MARISKA MORRIS takes a look at the minibus-taxi industry and how it could help reduce what is spent on the MyCiti bus rapid transit (BRT) system by 50 to 70 percent

The minibus-taxi industry provides transport to 91 percent of low-income households in South Africa. Despite being a R39-billion industry, minibus taxis are known to be unsafe with drivers speeding, driving dangerously and overloading.

Some specialists argue that the industry offers vital services and could possibly help to save the MyCiti BRT system from its funding crisis. Aside from the day-to-day feeder services, minibus taxis also provide long-distance transport, offer transport to and from funerals for families over weekends and some even function as a meter-type service.

Another important service minibus taxis offer is after-hours transport, for example to restaurant staff. "When these places close at 23:00 or 23:30 at night, well after the last trains and buses have stopped operating, the staff need to get home," says Roger Behrens, director of the Centre for Transport Studies (CfTS) at University of Cape Town.

Restaurants make arrangements with minibus drivers to transport these staff members. "Without minibus taxis, much of that kind of economic activity would not be possible," Behrens notes.

Even more valuable, some believe, is the industry's

ability to possibly save the MyCiti BRT system. The bus service faced a R52-million deficit for the 2016/17 financial year and the high level of subsidy necessary to support the service is unsustainable.

"The City of Cape Town cannot afford the MyCiti service. It's the Rolls-Royce of public transport systems," argues Basil Nagel, taxi owner and spokesperson for the Retreat Taxi Association.

The Transport and Urban Development Authority (TDA) is considering a hybrid-transport system, which will incorporate minibus taxis on the MyCiti bus routes. TDA estimates that this system could lead to a 50 to 70-percent reduction in bus transport costs. Before a hybrid transport system can be considered, however, there needs to be better understanding of the industry and its challenges.

"We talk about the taxi industry, but it's a collection of thousands of businesses," says Herrie Schalekamp, research officer at CfTS. Taxi associations are made up of multiple taxi owners with some preferring to act independently. There are an estimated 100 taxi associations operating in the City of Cape Town alone. These range from very formal to extremely informal businesses.

Some associations operate in part or in full as



registered companies. Each fleet of minibuses is registered to the company. Some associations have an extensive bookkeeping process, pay taxes, maintain vehicles and even enter into formal contracts with other businesses; like the Peninsula Taxi Association, which entered into a formal contract with the University of Cape Town to assist in transporting students.

Other associations are less formal and may lack formal bookkeeping systems, do not declare income and operate without a licence, a requirement for all formal public transport service providers. The City of Cape Town estimates that only a third to half of the industry is operating legally.

While the business model of taxi owners may vary, they all work on a target system, which specialists argue results in hazardous driving and overloading. A taxi owner demands a specific amount from the driver for the day, usually R600 with a full tank of petrol. Whatever else the driver earns is his compensation.

"Moving drivers onto some kind of salary is essential to address some of these problems," Behrens says. In theory, a basic salary would benefit both the owner and the driver. Many owners have an inaccurate perception of how well their business is doing because the driver doesn't disclose the full amount earned, he adds.

Behrens says: "Very often drivers' employment conditions are so bad that they have to do this in order to survive. A basic salary would offer drivers some stability, making them less likely to speed to meet their targets."

The salary might include benefits similar to those found in formal-sector employment such as pension, medical aid, retrenchment procedures, sick leave and annual leave. It would meet the requirements of a formal employment contract. This would also give the government the ability to enforce labour laws and improve working conditions.

To accommodate this system, specialists suggest a cashless fare collection system similar to the MyCiTi MyConnect card. Passengers would pay by swiping or tapping the card. While the solution might seem simple, the South African National Taxi Council (Santaco) has struggled to implement it for a decade.

The biggest resistance to the cashless system comes from the drivers, which is an international trend. For example, a national pay system called BebaPay was introduced in Kenya. "Despite its benefits, it remains unused as drivers and conductors refuse to take the card," explains Ken Griffith, consultant at Mobile Money Clearing House.

However, Santaco might still succeed. It launched its first successful pilot programme in Pietermaritzburg in 2015. A total of 115 minibuses were fitted with card-reading devices. Passengers preload cash on the free Fair Pay card or FairCard, which is then swiped inside the taxi.

The fact that these cards are free benefits low-income commuters who can't afford the R30 once-off payment for the MyCiTi's MyConnect card. Minibuses were fitted with a GPS to monitor speed and location. Santaco hopes to implement the system among various affiliated associations over the next four years and place taxi drivers on a salary.

While this is a step in the right direction, the industry still faces regular acts of violence, especially over routes. Nagel suggests a simple solution of coloured panels. Each vehicle would be registered to an area with an allocated colour. The nose panel or tailgate of the minibus would be painted in this colour. Nagel suggests revoking the licences of drivers who don't follow their routes.

The quality of vehicles used in the industry also needs to be addressed, either with additional support from government, or by reviewing the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme, which was introduced in 1999 to replace unsafe, unroadworthy minibus taxis.

"Not nearly enough is allocated to buy new vehicles," Behrens argues. The small trade-in of R50 000 caused some controversy in June 2016, as it emerged that taxi operators were buying converted panel vans, which were unfit for carrying passengers. By law any private vehicle can be altered, but needs the appropriate permits before it can transport passengers.

These panel vans had windows cut out of their doors, which weakened the structure. Seatbelts were fastened to the seat rather than the body of the van, and thus offered passengers no protection in an accident. These converted panel vans were much cheaper to purchase than a second-hand minibus.

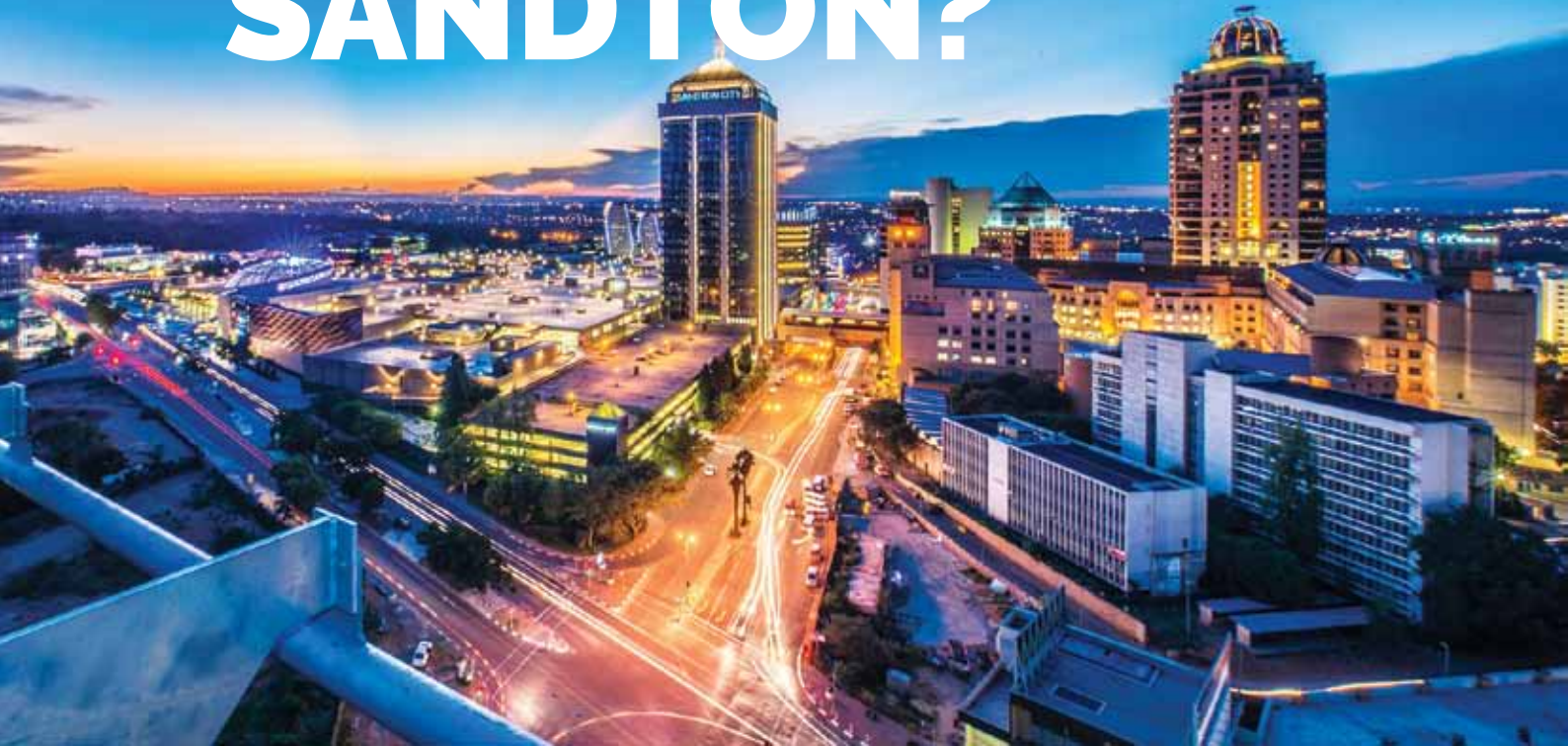
While poorly converted panel vans should have been refused a permit, vehicle testing stations and licensing boards were blamed for not properly monitoring the process. "Drivers and owners should also receive formal training to avoid similar situations and allow them to professionalise their business," Schalekamp notes.

"Where is the academy or college for a transport service provider? Train drivers and bus drivers are trained, so why not taxi drivers?" Nagel asks. Some believe that politicians are the biggest obstacle.

"Politicians want to be seen making a difference. A new bus service with fancy vehicles and stations is much more attractive than organising a scheme to support minibus-taxi owners and drivers in renewing their vehicles," Schalekamp notes. "While the MyCiTi bus service might help win votes, it is too expensive to sustain."

"We all know how to solve the problem, but we don't take the industry seriously," Nagel concludes. Perhaps by taking the minibus taxi industry more seriously as a transport provider, more affordable transport could be offered, which could, ultimately, save taxpayers valuable money. **F**

Sanity in **SANDTON?**



Is Sandton the richest square mile in Africa, or a bizarre case study in how not to move people, but rather to perpetuate inequality?

When Liberty Life first started developing Sandton City in the mid-1970s, it was hailed as the future financial capital of South Africa. The idea was to abandon the decaying central business district in Johannesburg and to create a high-image precinct, presumably "rising above the existing challenges", to use Gautrain terminology.

Liberty seems to be satisfied with its achievements – in a recent series of advertisements it has proudly claimed that "we answered by taking a piece of farmland and building Sandton City, the cornerstone of the richest square mile in Africa". Sadly, like the Gautrain, it has merely left many of "the existing challenges" untouched and has created a few new ones of its own.

One of the Liberty adverts happened to appear in the *Business Day* on February 17. On the very next page was an article by Nick Malherbe, a researcher at the University of South Africa, headed: "Water crisis exposes capitalism's inequities".

He may as well have been referring to traffic congestion and inefficient transport: "Little or no mention is made of climate change, or the effect big business has on it. Ecological problems such as pollution and the overuse of resources, which arise out of markets, are known as 'externalities'. They do not impinge on production and are therefore not considered in any meaningful way by companies," he wrote.

Sandton City and the other mini "Trump Tower" developments nearby have had a corrosive effect on traffic, energy consumption and general mobility in Sandton. Don't forget that the real Trump Tower has five subway stations within a one-kilometre radius. Not so in Sandton, where only one Gautrain station is expected to serve Africa's richest square mile, supported by an underperforming bus transport service.

None of this seems to bother the promoters of the Gautrain or the good burghers of Sandton, which is a popular venue for conferences and eco-mobility festivals. In February, a five-day transport conference was held at the Sandton Convention Centre, part-sponsored by the provincial government and the Gautrain. The theme was: "The Future of Public Transport: Go Green – Go Smart".

One of the speakers was Ismail Vadi, MEC for Transport in Gauteng, whose topic was: Developing a shared vision for integrated transport systems. (When I read that nausea-inducing word "vision", I see a bearded prophet staring into the sky, seeing angels with six wings, and creatures with the bodies of lions and heads of eagles.)

I would rather look at the reality on the ground. I planned a two-hour vigil outside the Sandton Gautrain station on February 15 to survey the low occupancy of the Gautrain feeder buses, but I soon realised that the non-Gautrain buses reflected an equally disturbing situation.



SOUTHERN AFRICAN BUS OPERATORS ASSOCIATION
VOICE OF THE BUS & COACH INDUSTRY

2017 CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

THE SOUTH AFRICAN BUS & COACH EVENT ON
PUBLIC TRANSPORT & EXHIBITIONS BY KEY INDUSTRY PLAYERS

24 & 25 MAY 2017

CSIR INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE
BRUMMERIA, PRETORIA

CONFERRING PROGRAMME

DAY 1 WEDNESDAY, 24 MAY 2017

10:00-13:00	Registration
13:00-13:45	Lunch
13:45-16:00	Plenary Session
16:30-17:15	Annual Report & Industry Overview
18:30	Gala Dinner

DAY 2 THURSDAY, 25 MAY 2016

07:30-08:30	Registration
08:30-10:00	Plenary Session
10:30-13:00	Parallel Sessions
13:00-14:00	Lunch
14:00-15:00	Plenary Session

TOPICS TO BE ADDRESSED BY KEY INDUSTRY OFFICIALS

- The DoT's Turnaround Strategy for Public Transport
- Operational Readiness & Overview of the Points Demerit System
- B-BBEE Bus & Coach Sector Charter
- Initiatives to Improve Road Safety in SA – RTMS
- Overview of the NLTA Amendment Bill
- Review of the White Paper on National Transport Policy
- Initiatives for the Empowerment of SMME's
- Challenges & Opportunities for the Coach Industry
- Cross-Border Industry Proposed Policy Reforms & Developments
- Integrated Public Transport Network, Progress at Municipalities

EXHIBITORS



For bookings or more information contact Cynthia on
011 511 7641 / cynthia@saboa.co.za or visit www.saboa.co.za

Between 06:00 and 08:05, 74 buses came past, all of them going north. There were 40 Putco buses, 28 Johannesburg Metrobuses, four Gauteng coaches and two City-to-City buses, carrying about 4 500 people in all. About 50 buses had commenced their journeys in the deep south of Johannesburg covering an average distance of around 40 km. Several buses carried standing passengers.

The slowest trip was Putco shift 9116, the 05:45 from Emdeni (Soweto) which came past at 08:05. That's two hours and 20 minutes in the bus. So, to reach the "richest square mile in Africa", many hapless bus passengers have to endure some harsh travelling conditions.

Three more observations: first, only one bus went south during the full two hours, which means that Sandton is nowhere close to having an all-purpose public transport service.

Second, it seems that the bus industry is going back to the converted lorries of old – there were several brand-new buses, but they had high floors, front engines and some seemed to have manual gearboxes.

Third, leaving Sandton, I passed a 2 000-strong cavalcade of single-occupant cars, many of them

German Shermans and Japanese Juggernauts grinding uphill along Sandton and Grayston Drive. I'd guess that hardware worth nearly R1 billion rand was involved.

In Sandton, neither private nor public transport is either green or smart – it is merely a bizarre case study in how not to move people and how to perpetuate inequality.

Perhaps the buildings qualify for green status by virtue of growing organic lettuce on their rooftop gardens, but the congested streets outside are anything but eco-friendly.

Can we do anything about this?

One: take all the seats out of the Gautrain and let at least the Soweto passengers transfer to the train at Park Station to let them complete their journeys more quickly.

Two: create a temporary contra-flow bus lane, during the morning and afternoon peaks, along Sandton and Grayston Drives to speed up buses coming from the west.

If we continue to do nothing, remember what happened to the foolish man who built his house on sand... **F**

BUS STOPS

TECHNOLOGY COULD HELP DEVELOP PUBLIC TRANSPORT

As the middle class grows, more people migrate to major cities. In Africa, it is expected that 50 percent of the population will live in cities by 2030. While this might boost economic growth, it also puts a strain on the infrastructure of cities – especially in terms of public transport.

"Available resources and the present modes of transportation are simply not equipped to accommodate the projected volumes of migration," comments Lawrence Kandaswami, MD at software company SAP South Africa (SAP SA).

"This is a challenge for most emerging countries, including South Africa," he says. Cities will need to grow at the same pace as the population to meet the demand.

"Technology has an important role to play, particularly in terms of transporting these urbanites," says Adam Hunter at Clarity Communications, the public relations company for SAP SA. He notes: "Advances in technology and the adoption of smartphones led to the connected traveller, who has constant access to information via social media and other channels."

This allows for personal engagement between the commuter and public transport providers – for which there is a growing need.

"There is a sense of urgency for transportation



authorities and cities to transform their business processes in order to provide a reliable and accessible transport system for their citizens," notes Kandaswami.

According to SAP SA, new technology, such as software for travel and transportation, can provide a comprehensive, end-to-end solution that enables transport organisations to plan, schedule, predict and react with real-time insights to passenger behaviour, travel patterns and transportation network conditions.

This will allow organisations to improve their interaction with commuters.

"Technology is already helping the passenger-travel industry across the world to deliver safety and a more integrated travel experience," Hunter says.



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