



Tata adds value with Xenon

Budget plays a significant role in targeting the market for Tata's new bakkie range

Tata has entered the double cab, lifestyle segment of the market with the boast that its new Xenon bakkie is what all other vehicles in the sector aspire to be.

That's the view of Michael Camacho, sales and marketing manager for the India-based manufacturer, who says the Xenon is aimed at families hoping to enter the lifestyle segment with a smaller budget than usual. Equally, though, Camacho says the bakkie will serve equally well as a trusty workhorse for builders, foremen, contractors and farmers.

New to the Tata range is the 3,0-litre, four cylinder common rail turbo diesel motor that powers the Xenon. Producing 84,5kW at 3 000rpm and 300Nm between 1 800 and 2 000rpm, the engine is responsive

and ideal for off-road work. On the highway, the Xenon cruises comfortably.

Steering is vague, however, with plenty of play in the column on either side of centre.

Launched in the Volksrust area – where spectacular views are afforded by an escarpment where the borders of three provinces meet – the Xenon showed its off-road capabilities in wet, slippery conditions.

Ground clearance is 200mm while front and rear overhangs are 870mm and 1 105mm respectively. The electronically operated low range transfer case – found on the 4x4 model – shifts the Xenon into a truly impressive off-road vehicle, fit for any farm style obstacle despite the fact that it is fitted with a limited slip differential rather than the much

appreciated diff lock.

Tata has included features such as power steering, air conditioning, height adjustable steering, a CD/MP3 player and electric windows to elevate the Xenon's comfort levels while excluding airbags and ABS.

However, build quality still remains an issue, the seat belt mechanism in one of the vehicles failing when I took the wheel. Plastics have a cheap feel and have been used in abundance. Nonetheless, the Xenon is priced at R169 995 for the 4x2 and R194 995 for the 4x4, much more affordable than established mainstream rivals but more expensive than similar offerings from Chinese manufacturers. Still, in my eyes it represents genuine value.

Stuart Williams