

FLEET

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FLEET MANAGEMENT ESSENTIALS



TATA XENON

Commercial focus for Tata

Roads Crashing

The state of SA's network

ROAD TEST: Peugeot 308 1.6 SW, Ford Fiesta 1600 TiCVT Trend

Tata sets its sights

Pricewise there has never been any argument with Tata, but the Indian automaker's first foray into the local market with the Telcoline did not produce a mad scramble for product at the dealerships – however, with the upcoming launch of the new Xenon and other commercial vehicles, this may change. **Colin Windell** takes a closer look.



The all-new Xenon 2.2L Double Cab is powered by a 2,2-litre direct injection diesel Dicor E11 compliant engine with VTT and intercooler, as well as a 32-bit ECU. It develops maximum power of 103 kW and a torque of 320 Nm from 1 700 r/min – 2 700 r/min and it offers a gradeability of 41% in the 4X2 mode and 90% in the 4X4 mode.

Xenon has a length of 5,1-metres, width of 1,8-metres and height of 1,7-metres. Cargo space is ample (1,40 x 1,40 x 1,40 metres) and can carry payload capacity of 1 000 kilograms. The body uses 0,8 – 1,55 mm thick steel sheets.

It is highly equipped and features power windows and seats, air-

conditioning, four-wheel drive, electronic change on the fly, alloy wheels, power steering and a CD player. Xenon also hosts a set of safety and security features that includes power locks with remote control, immobiliser, heating exterior mirrors, front and rear fog lamps, anti-lock braking and dual air bags.

Following a major investment, the Xenon is the first Tata vehicle to emanate from the Thonburi plant in Thailand – even though it was styled in England and features engine technology from Germany.

Syamal Gupta, chairman of Tata International and Director of Tata Sons, the holding company of the Tata Group

says: "The Tata Group has a long and cherished association with Africa. We would like to continue this association with our increasing involvement in various important projects and operations.

"South Africa continues to be a strategic market for us. The increasing range of Tata Motors passenger cars and commercial vehicles will further consolidate our strong presence in South Africa."

The diesel Xenon is also joined by a bigger brother in the form of the 3.0L, also powered by a Dicor E11 compliant engine offering torque of 300 Nm. With a claimed fuel economy that is one of the best in its class, it offers customers

an economical and affordable bakkie. The vehicle has one of the lowest turning circle radii, which enables it to be operated even on narrow roads and in cities.

The variants available are Double Cab 4X2, 4x4, Single Cab 4X2 and 4x4. These vehicles come standard with a service plan.

Ravi Kant, managing director, Tata Motors, says: "South Africa is Tata Motors' single largest export market. We are delighted with the response from South African customers. Our plan is to offer an even wider range of products, which are relevant to the market and, as has been our tradition, offer superior value for money."

In addition to the Xenon, the company used the Johannesburg International Motor Show in October last year to provide a taste of its intentions in the commercial vehicle market for 2009.

The company launched its 1-ton Ace mini-truck that, since its launch in India in 2005, has received stupendous response

from customers across India according to Kant.

After having successfully sold about 250 000 vehicles of the Ace platform in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, the Ace 1.0T makes its debut in South Africa.

It is powered by the Tata 475 IDI turbo-charged intercooled engine that churns out 52 kW of power and 135 Nm torque. It has an independent front suspension with anti roll bars and rear leaf springs and braking is provided by front discs and rear drums.

Tata claims fuel efficiency of around 6,5 l/100 km.

Fleet sales manager for Tata, Craig Salmon, says the company is serious about significantly increasing its fleet market share during 2009.

"It is not only the new Xenon that is going to help. Tata is introducing a wide spread of product across the commercial vehicle sectors including trucks and buses with the long-term aim of making Tata commercials a one-stop



Xenon 3.0L Dicer Single Cab



ACE 1 Ton

Trucks

The new trucks for 2009 are the facelift versions of the company's bestselling 4 ton, 6 ton and 12 ton units, aimed at expanding the company's current range offerings.

LPT 713 EX2: This full forward truck is a facelift version of the current LPT 713 and is equipped with a 6-cylinder TCIC Euro II compliant engine and will be available in 3 400 mm and 3800 mm wheel bases, with a GVW of 7 700 kilograms. The vehicle has new mechanically suspended seats and a host of other features.

LPT 1116: This gives Tata Motors a presence in the 6-7 ton payload segment. Powered by the 697 engine, the truck offers a maximum speed of 105 km/h and gradeability of 34%. The vehicle is equipped with mechanically suspended seats for driver comfort and a host of features for ease in operating the vehicle.

2523 6X4 cargo and dumper: Tata Motors is moving into the multi-axle heavy commercial vehicle segment with the 2523 6X4 cargo and dumper, both of which offer a high power to weight ratio, are Euro II compliant and are equipped with a 230 HP Cummins engine that gives a torque of 800 Nm.

Other models include the Novus 6X4 480 HP tractor and the LPTA 2038, which is a versatile 6X6 tactical high mobility all-wheel powered vehicle. The LPTA 2038 is equipped with an automatic gearbox and a 380 HP ISLE Cummins engine.



LPT 713 EX2



LPK 2523 Tipper 6x4

shopping experience for business users.

"However, it is not all work – the new Xenon is stylish and comfortable enough for dual-role company users who also want their vehicle for leisure activities at the weekend."

There are about 56 000 Tata vehicles on South African roads currently, of which close to 30 000 are commercial vehicles. Tata Motors sold more than 10 000 commercial vehicles in 2007-08 in South Africa.

The models currently being sold are Indica, Indigo, Indigo Station Wagon in the passenger cars segment, trucks in the

medium and heavy commercial vehicle segment and Tata Novus tipper in the extra-heavy commercial vehicle segment.

Tata Motors is number two in the light truck segment and is at the number one position in the 8-tonne truck and tipper segment.

In South Africa, the company's range of trucks and buses is sold through its distributor, Tata Automobile Corporation (SA), a subsidiary of Tata Africa Holdings.

The company also assembles the 18-seater and 32-seater Tata Ubuntu buses and has a network of more than 35 full dealers and nine service dealers

across the country. The company's range of bakkies is sold through its distributor, Accordian Investments, a joint venture company in which Tata Africa and Associated Motor Holdings have an equal share holding of 40% each, with the remaining 20% being held by Ukhamba Holdings (Pty) Ltd, a black empowerment initiative of the Imperial Group.

In addition to South Africa, Tata Motors has a presence in Algeria, Angola, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Fleeting Impression



A short time with a pre-launch version of the Xenon 2.2L Double Cab started with an immediate impression of a vehicle of significant proportion – fitting it into a standard garage confirmed the 5,1-metre by 1,8-metre vehicle is, indeed, impressively proportioned.

However, the styling ensures it does not look bulky and the square load box (1,4-metres) is large enough for most

business applications without infringing on passenger space front or rear. And, talking of passenger space, the Xenon is more than sufficiently comfortable for extended journeys.

Moreover, with an efficient power steering system, the size does not impinge on manoeuvrability and it is quite easy to whisk the behemoth through the early morning traffic, delightfully intimidating lesser autos – and even some taxis – into

giving way rapidly.

In terms of power and performance the Xenon may not compete with some of the more overtly leisure packaged double cabs on the market, preferring rather to stick to the business end of the scale with power enough to lug full loads economically and endlessly, still offering ample in terms of cabin creature comforts.