



VECV picks horses for courses

Story: Sridhar Chari
Photography: Rommel Albuquerque

Rather than trying to second guess the market, VECV has put together an intelligent matrix of products, platforms and aggregates in the shape of the 'Pro'. The idea is to be relevant to as large a chunk of the market as possible.

While one end of India's CV market still prefers basic trucks that will just about do the job, the other, increasingly resurgent section desires trucks with better speeds and superior fuel-economy in an environment where fuel costs are on the rise and road infrastructure is improving. The 11 models of the 'Pro' range of trucks and buses, showcased by VECV represent the company's intent to be relevant to each of these market segments. In simple words, the company seeks to fill most, if not all product portfolio gaps. Consider this, the 50:50 JV between the Volvo Group and Eicher Motors Limited already counts as part of its India offerings, premium vehicles from the Volvo Trucks' stable

on the one hand and economy products from the Eicher arsenal on the other. So, the gameplan is to introduce a range of Eicher 'Pro' products to populate the fertile middle ground in India. Correspondingly, the products have been made export-ready too. After all, as Joachim Rosenberg, Executive Vice President, Volvo Group Trucks Sales & Marketing and JVs, Asia Pacific, says, 'Eicher is considered to be the fifth brand in the competitive portfolio of Volvo Group brands.' In order to accomplish these twin objectives, VECV has dug into global product platforms and aggregates from the stables of Volvo Trucks and Nissan Diesel (UD Trucks), localising them and integrating with the proven

Indian platform where necessary. 'The new range embodies a mix of the Volvo Group's global technology and Eicher Motors' experience in frugal engineering,' sums up Rosenberg. So, you have the Eicher Pro 1000 straddling the 5-14 tonne GVW bracket, featuring an upgraded cabin and powered by 90-110 HP engines. 'The Pro 1000 range to be launched in February 2014 is evolutionary in relation to our current range of LMCVs. Its pricing and positioning will reflect this fact,' states Siddhartha Lal, MD & CEO, Eicher Motors. At the heart of this range of trucks is Eicher's proven 3.3 litre, 4-cylinder mechanical engine, made contemporary on the back of inputs from the Volvo Group. The same four-cylinder engine has been upgraded to a 3.8-litre, electronically-governed mill that delivers output in the range of 115-140 HP for the Eicher Pro 3000 series. These 9-14 tonne GVW trucks come with an impressive new cabin. The same cabin platform has been enlarged for the Eicher Pro 6000 series of 16-40 tonne GVW, heavy duty trucks, tippers & tractors. This series is powered by the VEDX 5, four-cylinder, five-litre engine that delivers an output of 180-220 HP. The 4-valve CRS engine, is governed by the Volvo's EMS (Engine Management System) 3.0. Given that it can deliver such high output for a relatively smaller displacement, superior fuel-economy is the natural benefit – the advantage being in the region of 5-10 percent. It is therefore an imminent fit for haulage applications that call for better speed and fuel-economy without a specific demand for high torque. For the more demanding applications such as tractors and tippers, there is the VEDX



8, a six-cylinder, 8-litre engine that issues power in the range of 220-280 HP. The Pro 8000 series also gets a spanking new cabin. The interesting bit is that this 2.4 metre wide cabin is not being manufactured in VECV's Pithampur complex, but in Volvo Trucks India's Bangalore facility. This is as good an indication, as any of its international origins, and possible application in export models. After all, Euro VI compliant versions of the VEDX 5 and 8 engines are also being made in Pithampur. 'As you can see, we have a range of options for every tonnage category thanks to purpose-built platforms,' beams Vinod Aggarwal, Chief Executive

▲ (L-R) Vinod Aggarwal, Joachim Rosenberg, Siddhartha Lal and Philippe Divry.

Officer, VE Commercial Vehicles Ltd. Broadly speaking, the trucks feature optimised drivelines to allow for tangible benefits like lower rolling resistance. Impressively, cruise control has been made available as an option. Additionally, a coaching interface is now in place for drivers. They receive feedback on driving patterns through a dashboard display. Telematics solutions if chosen may be the force multiplier, offering the fleet manager, remote access to the truck's performance metrics and activating Eicher's aftersales network if necessary. The anti-theft alarm helps provide a

Technical specifications of the trucks on display						
Model	GVW (tonnes)	Chassis Configuration	Engine model	Displacement (Litres)	Cylinders	Max. Output (HP)
Eicher Pro 1059 XP	7.2	4x2	E 483 DI TCI	3.3	4	94
Eicher Pro 1110 XP	13	4x2	E 483 2V TCI	3.3	4	114
Eicher Pro 3008XP	8.2	4x2	E 494 4V CRS	3.8	4	147
Eicher Pro 3013	13	4x2	E 494 4V CRS	3.8	4	121
Eicher Pro 3014	14.5	4x2	E 494 4V CRS	3.8	4	147
Eicher Pro 6031	31	8x2	VEDX 5	5.1	4	210
Eicher Pro 6025T-Tipper	25	6x4	VEDX 8	7.7	6	220
Eicher Pro 8049	49	6x4	VEDX 8	7.7	6	280
Eicher Pro 8031T-Tipper	31	8x4	VEDX 8	7.7	6	280



measure of security. Depending upon the model, the hydraulically tilttable cabin is available in either a two or a four point suspension. Vehicle applications help determine the choice between cabin heights/widths, provision of sleepers and HVACs in the aerodynamic cabins. The development of these aggregates has entailed three million hours of engineering activity, 7.7 million kms of testing and 50,000 hours of engine development. VECV's customers too have pitched in with more than 3,000 man days of effort.

▲ While the Pro 1000 series is powered by Eicher's 3.3 litre mechanical engine the Pro 3000 series bears an electronically governed 3.8 litre version of the engine.

fully built buses, expandable to 15,000 buses. The focus is very much on light and medium duty buses, where VECV feels it can add value. 'We are able to provide as many seats on a medium duty school bus platform as would earlier have only been possible on a heavy duty platform,' explains Lal. Given that Volvo Buses offers premium city and intercity coaches and that it is soon set to introduce a flanking mid-range brand, it does make sense for the Eicher brand to retain its focus on its traditional segment.

But, this does not mean that large buses are off the radar for a company that has developed a rear-engined semi low floor bus. 'We are clear that none of our buses will overlap with those put out by Volvo Buses. But, that does not mean that we will not make larger buses,' clarifies Aggarwal. Reading between the lines, there is space for VECV to roll out larger front-engined buses. To put out a product of this nature, the company could either deploy the VEDX 5 engine or convert its current 4.9 litre, six-cylinder

■ Fully built buses

The Eicher Skyline Pro Buses, have now been developed on a completely new platform to offer a higher number of seats and comfort across preferred applications like school and staff buses. The best part is that the buses are manufactured at the company's own integrated bus manufacturing facility. The plant, which features a robotised painting process, currently has an annual capacity to put out 7,500

1. The 'Pro' Series features aggregates that owe their origin to different product platforms from the Volvo Group's global stables



2. The Pro 8049, a 49 tonne GVW, 6x4 tractor powered by a 280HP engine is the flagship product of the range.



mechanical engine into an electronic mill.

■ Big picture

Olof Persson, President of AB Volvo and CEO of the Volvo Group is happy to commemorate 15 years of the Volvo Group's presence in India. The group which is all set to become the world's largest CV maker in 2014 on the back of its JV with Chinese company DongFeng, derives a significant part of its success from Indian operations. Indeed, since 2008, when VECV came into being, sales have doubled volumes to 48,000 units, and market share (5-49 tonne GVW YTD October '13) to 13.7 percent. During this time, VECV has grown to acquire a turnover of USD 1 billion and an EBIT margin of 10 percent, something, which Lal says, allows the debt-free company to make investments entirely out of internal accruals.

Indeed, from the beginning of the JV in 2008 till Sept 2013; the company has invested approximately Rs.1,800 crore. The investments have gone into the setting up of the medium duty engine plant and bus body manufacturing plant, a new cabin and BIW line, CED Paint shop, Dewas plant for the component business, parts distribution centre. Most importantly, overall vehicle assembly capacity has been expanded up to 5,500 units per month from 3,000 units in 2008. The company intends to invest another Rs. 700 crore in 2014 towards expansion of ongoing projects like the engine plant, bus body plant, new products development, as also a gradual ramp up of capacity towards the installed capacity of 1,00,000 units per annum.

The company not just expects to benefit from a recovery in the

▶ Axle ratios and alignments have been optimised as part of the chassis optimisation effort.



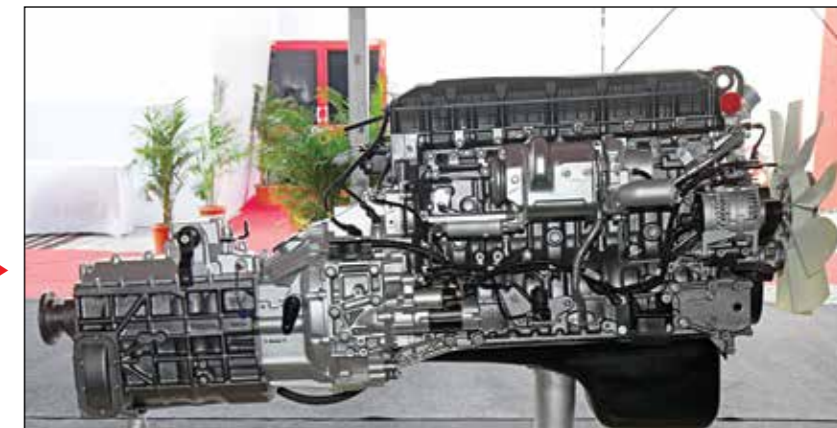
domestic market by 2015, but also for the 'Pro' range to expand volumes in the overseas arena. Currently, exports of 'Eicher' branded trucks, primarily to SAARC countries account for just 7 percent of VECV's sales by volume – this proportion could double once VECV reaches out to a larger market like the middle east, North Africa and ASEAN region.

■ Aftermarket agenda

Sample some statistics: 300 workshops, more than 400 exclusive parts counters, 350 service vans that promise to put a truck back on the road in 48 hours, 2,400 multi-brand parts retail stores, 100 Eicher Genuine Part Shoppes, more than 270

sales and service points, over 1,600 service bays and container workshops in more than 20 remote locations. Impressive they are, but one would probably not expect anything less for a company which has a population of 3.5 lakh trucks on the road. The secret (or not-so-secret) weapon in VECV's armoury is the 10,000 square metre parts centre at Pithampur. Four times the size of the earlier facility, it was set up at an investment of Rs. 20 crore. At most points in time, it holds 20,000 kinds of parts, tallying to a combined value of USD 300 mn. Tapping into 250 vendors, the centre ensures an impressive 95 percent availability of parts, where the norm was 60 percent as recently

▶ About 1,000 units of the Euro VI variant of VEDX 5 and 8 litre engines have been exported to the Volvo Group for its European operations.





as three years ago. The poor availability created a gap, which would often be filled by spurious parts. 'Earlier, the thought process was that a greater stock of parts, meant a corresponding drain on working capital. This led to less than adequate parts availability. Now, we offer zero credit, but stock a much larger range of parts. Not only has this move improved parts availability, but also boosted revenues,' explains Devashish Handa, Head, Bus Sales & Marketing, VECV.

1. The Pro 1110 XP is an indication that the Pro 1000 series represents more than token changes relative to the proven model.

2. The Eicher Skyline Pro staff transport bus.

The Pro 6031 is a 31 tonne GVW, 8x2 haulage vehicle powered by the 4 cylinder, 210 HP engine.

week long journey. The cab welding line is fully robotised. Typically, a cabin needs 250-255 welds. There are separate cabin trim lines for LMCVs and HCVs.

The cabin's single piece internal and external doors are hemmed by a robotic process to prevent leakage and corrosion. We spot a fixture holding the cabin's roof for assembly. On an average, a cabin rolls out of the line every 140 minutes. It is then sent out to the first floor for painting.

Under the sophisticated ERODIP technology, the entire cabin is dipped into 1,00,000 litres of paint. During the course of its 3.5 minute dip, applicators working at 80,000 RPM spray paint all over the cabin – thereby providing protection against premature corrosion. The paint shop also allows for electro deposition and top coating. The finished cabin, engines and axles are then integrated with the chassis in the new chassis assembly line.

■ Manufacturing mantra

Already 1,000 Euro VI base engines have been delivered from the VEPT plant to the Volvo Group's European operations. As this magazine has reported earlier, the engine plant features 50 percent automation and 100 percent in-process verification such that errors are eliminated at source.

The smart cell, now assembles 168 engine components in as little as 130 seconds – a feat which would have otherwise called for five stations. The export model engines are put in a dust-free and temperature and pressure-controlled environment to prevent contamination during their 6-8

