



With BS-VI Mahindra's Futuristic Technology Spending Pays Off

By T Murralli

Mahindra's Truck and Bus Division (MTB), has been creating systems and technologies to meet BS-VI norms and presenting a new and refreshed range of trucks. It is working also on new buses which will come on the Furio platform, the company's new range of Intermediate Commercial Vehicles (ICVs).


"This is something which is keeping us busy along with BS-VI. We had announced plans to launch 22 products, from five tonne up to 18 tonne, on Furio platform. Only four were on BS-IV. The balance will be on BS-VI. Along with that, on Blazo platform we are working on some more value propositions," Vinod Sahay, CEO, Mahindra Truck and Bus and Construction Equipment Divisions, told *AutoParts Asia*.

The norm for Real Driving Emission (RDE) that may be applicable from 2023 has not been finalised. When vehicles are sent to testing agencies, apart from chassis dynamometer they also carry out tail pipe test in a duty cycle which is more real-time. They are doing this with all manufacturers

mainly to arrive at a norm that will be announced later. Sahay said, "My expectation is that it will be fixed only by the first quarter of the next financial year. But we are already factoring that in our BS-VI programme. A big part of it is related to how we are designing our DOC, DPF and SCR systems. We take care also of an additional absorption of pollutants that come from the tail pipe."

Whatever the technology vehicle manufacturers are providing, for the end customers it is cost of acquisition and operating cost that determines their choice of brands and models. They want more for less – in terms of cost of ownership and lower operating cost. Therefore, challenges for CV makers have been ever increasing – in terms of offering additional features with no increase in cost which eventually exerts pressure. "When we switch from BS-IV to BS-VI, theoretically, it would reduce fuel consumption by three to four percent. But that is not acceptable for us. We want to reduce it further. We had only three years to meet BS-VI and to get over this negative impact of fuel

efficiency. We had to do this through other improvements everywhere else. We have launched Blazo X with which we took the lead over industry by five to seven percent improved fuel efficiency. Even if we lose one or two percent from this level we will still have the advantage, with the assumption that others are also going to lose two to three percent. If we look at it from the industry perspective, does BS-VI give the operator a vehicle that is drastically higher in operating economics to overcome the incremental cost of about Rs 2.5 to Rs 3 lakh (difference between BS-IV and BS-VI); it doesn't look like it. The good thing will be that the large population of vehicles in India is not BS-IV. So there would be enough incentive, even if people don't postpone their purchases. Many people who will be going for BS-VI have BS-II or BS-III trucks; when compared to these trucks the new vehicles (BS-VI) will be far better in terms of power to weight ratio, reliability and fuel efficiency. That will be enough incentive. But if we purely compare BS-VI vehicles with those made on March 31, 2020 (with a price



gap of Rs 2.5 to Rs 3 lakh) there will not be a big difference in operating economy," Sahay said.

For instance, if an operator has about 500 trucks, out of which 100 are BS-IV and the rest are older, there is enough reason for him to move the older trucks to BS-VI because fuel efficiency improvement will be huge. For the axle loading norm, the downside is that it spiked the

maintenance cost for most of the operators. "At Mahindra, we already have a powertrain which is much superior. BS-VI will also have a range which will have all these upgraded for everyone. This window of selling older trucks with higher GVW will be available for current trucks that have already been approved or have ARAI certificate by July last year. At Mahindra we are producing only new norm vehicles and giving them as standard and not option," he said.

The demand for higher payload and better TCO requirements are increasing; but both usually contradict. This can be mitigated

by material substitution at the right cost, he said. For example, some players are working on a material based on graphite which will replace some of the current steel grades.

This, according to him, should be big but it is still some years away. Apart from that there are opportunities. "We are exploring each of them. Shedding a couple of 100 kgs of weight is possible. The problem is that three years of doing BS-VI and along with that doing all this has been a challenge. Some of it will be in phases," he said.

About the impending launch Sahay said all the current GVW points of Blazo will continue in the new avatar; it is looking at adding some new variants. The older 49-tonne did not have a bogie suspension; it may add that now and variants will be introduced. Furio will see a big explosion in BS-VI. Buses will see a total new face and platform. "We will also have a larger play of long platform overhang (LPO) buses where the front door will be ahead of the front axle. We have unveiled a model recently at Prawaas. We are going for a much wider play next year. We believe the increasing emission norms will be advantageous for players like us as there will be cost competitiveness. Our investments on cabin, platform and powertrain are reaping fruits now," he said.



Vinod Sahay

After Sales Service

Along with the preparations for BS-VI the company has been working on the aftersales service as it expects some major changes in this area. For a platform like Blazo, there are 180 parts which are new. And there are changes related to aftertreatment, diesel oxidation catalyst (DOC) etc., and all these have been marked in its training programme. The company has captive training programmes for all senior technicians in Pune. It is also imparting training in four other locations while refresher training is given at the dealership. Therefore, the company does not see any problem in servicing BS-VI vehicles, he said.

Augmentation of dealership is also on as there will be a few special tools required to service BS-VI vehicles. "The good thing is that we have upgraded to SCR system. The technology is not unknown anymore. Still there are some new parts and new systems. We have good working relationship with suppliers of these systems who are supportive. Barring these tools and stocking of BS-VI parts I don't think any investment on infrastructure is needed," he said.

Sahay said it is too early to talk about giving warranty of six lakh km for BS-VI vehicles also as validation is only going on. There are big changes around the corner. A formal announcement will be made during their launch. **APA**