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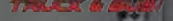
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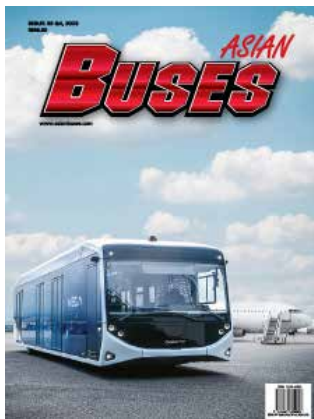
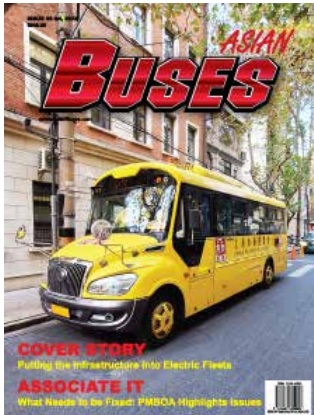




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# **ASIAN BUSES**

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# Manufactured for Sustainability

When you read a text and the same word keeps on being used, the human brain will quickly think that it has already read a passage. An engaging text is therefore one that utilises different words with the same meaning. Thus, when writing my articles, I have trained myself to remember all the key words that I have used. For instance, the word “text”, which I have put there in the first line and “article” article a little later on. As you can see, a lot of crafting, goes into a magazine. I am doing this without the help of AI, I manufacture this publication.

And this word, manufacture, could be the theme for this issue of Asian Buses. For instance, you will be able to read about TACT Coach & Seat Manufacturing and how they approach bus body building. Also a force to reckon with for decades is HAMMAR, which we will feature extensively in our cover story, commemorating their 50th anniversary. Hengst too, has a good reason to be jolly as they are celebrating their 10th year of their Singapore office being set up. Frank Maergner talks about door-to-door sales, which we call “Klinkenputzen” in German, meaning polishing doorknobs.

Volvo has just launched a highly versatile EV bus platform, which we feature in detail in the Launches section. Interestingly, unlike trucks, buses require their body to be build. Whereas trucks come ready to roll, there is a substantial amount of work that needs to go into the manufacturing of a bus. In doing so, those creating the bus will have gained a lot of knowledge and skills.

Having tried, I have concluded that AI (Artificial Intelligence) may not be the right tool for us at the moment. For a while, we had a chat bot on our website, fed with all the magazines we published. The bot could have been used as a tool to give you the history of the bus market in Malaysia and Southeast-Asia. However, many a times the answers of that bot would be plain wrong, even attributing certain events by one brand to their fiercest competitor. Schools are currently trying to address the issue of students using AI to write their assignments. Meanwhile, my articles are all 100 percent hand-crafted. Manufacturing stems from Latin, meaning to make by hand. Somehow, I feel that the transport industry is still one where human interactions and manual work plays a big role. During the pandemic we only did very few video calls. Even though, one can use computers to design a truck, eventually, a panel of drivers typically tests the vehicle in real life.

All hands on deck: the Malaysia Commercial Vehicle Exhibition 2024, organised by Asian Trucker, is going to be the biggest such event in Southeast-Asia again. For the sixth time, we will be hand-delivering an exceptional gathering of the industry. MAN Truck & Bus alongside PETRONAS as the main sponsors have already told us about their plans for the event and it promises to be a massive programme. Hengst Asia Pacific is joining in with their celebration of their 10th anniversary while others are whispering to us about the news they are going to release. It would surely be best to experience this in person, after we have put the final touches onto it in the next couple of days. For me, the most exciting part is the fact that I can actively assist each exhibitor with their needs, making it a curated, a hand-made event, rather than just a run of the mill session.

See you soon to shake your hands, welcoming you to Asian Trucker at MCVE,

Stefan Pertz  
Editor, Asian Buses



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# Strengthening East Coast Connections

*Sanwa Tours banks on Yutong buses to capitalise on the increased demand for transportation to Mersing.*



Mersing, a coastal town in southeast Malaysia, known as the departure point for ferries to offshore islands like Pulau Tioman and Pulau Rawa is ramping up efforts to attract more visitors. The town centre is home to the ornate, Hindu Sri Subramaniam Temple and the north, the village of Air Papan has a beach. In January, Sanwa Tours (M) Sdn Bhd, received two new coaches to support their route from Terminal Bersepadu Selatan outside of Kuala Lumpur to Mersing.

According to Mr Sathiv, Director, Sanwa Tours (M), Sdn Bhd, their routes need a bus that can cross the range without problems and is able to travel long distances. Each trip between Mersing and the bus terminal is about 450 Kilometres and takes about six hours. "The advantage of using the bus is that we can relax throughout the journey while enjoying the scenery," Sathiv told Asian Buses.

Founded in December 2012, Sanwa Express is a popular bus operator in Malaysia. The bus service is managed by Sanwa Tours (M) Sdn Bhd, headquartered in Muadzam Shah, Pahang. Its powerful presence in Muadzam Shah makes it a traveller's first choice when they decide to select an operator to book their ticket in Malaysia. The Sanwa Express offers excellent services at reasonable rates.

The company quickly established itself as a locals' favourite for transportation thanks to its excellent express bus service, which is well-liked by customers. Sanwa Express online ticket booking can be done easily. The bus operator has a significant presence in the Muadzam Shah bus station in Pahang, offering several routes from there to places like Kuala Lumpur, Klang, Shah Alam and Seremban.

On Saturday, 20th January, two Yutong ZK6127H Auto Chassis were handed over to Sanwa Tours. According to Sathiv, the choice fell to the Chinese brand after careful consideration whereby a key criteria was durability. These buses, as he explained, are offering high ride comfort while being affordable to operate. Another advantage identified is the easy availability of spare parts. Now that Mersing is increasing efforts to attract tourists, these capacity offered by these two buses is already exceeded, indicating that more would need to be added to meet the current and future demand.

"Mersing is the gateway to the beautiful islands in Johor and Pahang, of course our target for tourism is domestic and Singaporeans, but surprisingly, also locals from the area and students" Sathiv told Asian Buses.

Sathiv elaborated on their choice of using the Yutong ZK6127H Auto Chassis as it can be justified by a several reasons: firstly, the relative fuel saving (lower fuel consumption) and more efficient operational performance comparatively to the other makes available in the market. Secondly, the lower cost in terms of maintenance and after-sales services as well as the cost of spare parts and components in the market to reduce operational burden. When needed, the widely, readily and easily available spare parts and components supply across Malaysia translate into the reduction of operational down time. "We have experienced the after-sales support provided being prompt and responsive."

The Yutong ZK6127H Auto Chassis is equipped with a 375-horsepower WEICHAH engine, imported ZF gearbox and MERITOR 13T rear axle to ensure robust power performance. With its thermal management system of engines, it can save one to two litres of fuel per 100 kilometres and the driving range is above 1 900 kilometres. Sanwa Tours expects the total cost of ownership (TCO) of these vehicles to be rather reasonable comparatively to other makes in the market being full automatic transmission without a clutch.





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# Karsan Autonomous e-ATAK Also Becomes Finland's First Self-Driving Electric Bus

Offering high-tech mobility solutions with the vision of being “One Step Ahead in the Future of Mobility”, Karsan continues to renew Europe’s transport infrastructure with its electric and autonomous vehicles. In this regard, Karsan signed a contract last November with the Norwegian Vy Group, one of the largest governmental authorities in public transport across the Scandinavian countries, to sell autonomous vehicles. As part of the agreement, Karsan has recently delivered an 8-meter Autonomous e-ATAK to Vy Group, which will be operated by REMOTED, a firm in Finland’s Tampere city. Stating that Autonomous e-ATAK, Karsan’s driverless model developed in cooperation with ADASTEC will also be Finland’s first full-size driverless bus to carry passengers under real road conditions after Michigan State University and Stavanger, Karsan CEO Okan Baş said, “Karsan continues to achieve firsts in the Scandinavian countries. In this context, we are breaking new ground and launching the first autonomous vehicle project in Finland. Karsan Autonomous e-ATAK, which we developed in cooperation with ADASTEC, will now serve in Tampere. We continue to transform the world’s transport infrastructure, especially in Europe, through our electric and autonomous vehicles. Karsan is constantly achieving firsts in every market with the sales strategies it has planned. Owing to this new project, we have let the city of Tampere be one step ahead in public transport solutions.

In a comment on the matter, Dr. Ali Peker, CEO of ADASTEC said: “As part of our solid cooperation with Karsan and Applied Autonomy, we thank REMOTED for allowing us to launch our project and believing in our vision. We have gained experience from the operations we have carried out under adverse weather conditions for years. Tampere offers the opportunity once again to prepare our automated bus for the roads in Finland and prove the superior performance of our experience and SAE Level-4 automation technology in these challenging circumstances. Our

technology, which always prioritizes safety and efficiency, demonstrates the strength of our current collaborations while embodying our shared vision regarding future transport solutions.”

Bringing future technologies to the present day and navigating the sector with pioneering attempts, Karsan continues to achieve firsts in global markets. Drawing attention with its innovations in the European electric public transport market, Karsan keeps moving to break ground in self-driving transportation. In this context, Karsan Autonomous e-ATAK started to count the days to hit the roads in Finland.

Karsan, which signed an agreement to supply autonomous vehicles to Norwegian Vy Group, one of the largest public transport authorities across the Nordic countries, delivered an 8-meter Autonomous e-ATAK for use in Tampere, Finland. Carrying passengers on a 5-kilometer route within Michigan State University, the USA, Autonomous






e-ATAK has provided service for Stavanger, Norway, since 2022. Stating that Autonomous e-ATAK, Karsan's driverless model will also be Finland's


first full-size driverless bus to carry passengers under real road conditions after Michigan State University and Stavanger, Karsan CEO Okan Baş said, "Karsan continues to achieve firsts in Scandinavian countries. In this regard, we have initiated the first autonomous vehicle project in Finland. Having carried over 25 thousand passengers in more than 1,5 years, Karsan Autonomous e-ATAK will now offer service in Tampere. We will continue to transform the world's transport infrastructure, especially in Europe, through our electric and autonomous vehicles.

Dr. Ali Peker, the CEO of ADASTEC, a US-based company located in East Lansing, MI, with which Karsan has collaborated for the Autonomous e-ATAK's development, gave the following details regarding the subject: "As part of our solid cooperation with Karsan and Applied Autonomy, we thank REMOTED for allowing us to launch our project and believing in our vision. We've tackled adverse weather conditions before, and now, in Tampere, we're ready to take on a new challenge with our bus. This bus will navigate a 5.8km route, stopping at 17 bus stops and crossing 20 pedestrian paths, showcasing our Level-4 automated driving ability to handle complex urban environments safely and efficiently. This step forward demonstrates our technology's readiness for real-world application and our commitment to advancing public transport."

Pointing out the tenacity of Karsan to achieve firsts in every market with its planned sales strategies, Okan Baş stated, "We are enabling the city of Tampere to be one step forward in public transport solutions with the Autonomous e-ATAK, which we have delivered for use in Tampere, Finland, through the Norwegian Vy Group, one of the largest public transport authorities across the Scandinavian countries. As a top solution partner for solving issues regarding public transport in the Scandinavian markets, we will keep this position through our autonomous and electric vehicles." Capable of moving on a planned route on its own, the Autonomous e-ATAK with Level-4 autonomous technology can perform autonomous driving at a speed of 40 km/h under all weather conditions, day or night. Autonomous e-ATAK, which carries out all operations like a driver, such as approaching the bus stops on the route, managing the processes of getting off and on, and providing guidance and management at intersections, crossings, and traffic lights, will start to serve in Tampere, Finland with its features navigating the future public transport. 

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## Daimler Buses Sets Goals for Global Growth

*Daimler Buses sets itself ambitious goals for the future and intends to further expand market leadership.*

**D**aimler Buses has set itself ambitious goals for the future. The company is already the leader in all its global core markets and wants to further expand on this position by 2030. Furthermore, the manufacturer aims to achieve an adjusted return on sales of nine percent by the end of the decade, assuming favourable market conditions. Daimler Buses plans to reach eight percent by as early as 2025. The plans are for the company to become more profitable even in a less than ideal market environment. Most of all, this is intended to provide the manufacturer with the means to shoulder the necessary investments relating to the transformation and to strengthen its competitiveness over the long term.

Alongside consistent expansion of the e-portfolio, the company is planning to align its offering of services even more closely to changing customer needs. Furthermore, the manufacturer intends to drive forward the digitalization of products and processes to create further added value for customers and to boost efficiency within the company. Implementation of all measures will be closely coordinated and make a contribution to a holistic, customer-focused strategy. This was announced by Till Oberwörder, CEO Daimler Buses, today at an event held by the manufacturer in Madrid.

Till Oberwörder: “The transformation of our industry is in full swing and demand for environmentally friendly means of transport is increasing continuously. We can make the world more sustainable with locally CO2-neutral buses and thus make an important contribution to mitigating climate change. We are firmly convinced that this is the ‘decade of the bus’. We intend to make the best possible use of the opportunities opening up and, from a position of strength, make our mark on the transformation with our products and services like no other.”

### **Bus Traffic Expected to Grow – Focus Increasingly on CO2-neutral Vehicles**

The significance of bus travel is expected to increase around the world over the next few years. For instance, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) assumes that demand for public mobility by bus will increase by a total of around ten percent in Europe and Latin America between 2019, i.e. from the level prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, and 2030. Public local transportation with city buses is expected to be the strongest driver. In this context, the focal point will continue to shift significantly towards locally CO2-neutral buses. The European Union, for instance, established the corresponding specifications at the beginning of 2024: at least 90 percent of all new city bus purchases by a fleet operator must consist of locally CO2-neutral vehicles from 2030 onwards. From 2030 onwards, plans are for the segment of intercity buses and coaches to emit 45 percent less CO2.

### **Buses and Trucks with E-drivetrains, Components and Technologies that are as Similar as Possible**

Daimler Buses is consistently pursuing a clear e-roadmap across all segments: Electrically powered city buses have already been in series production since





customers throughout Europe since mid-2023. As recently as the beginning of the year, Daimler Buses Solutions GmbH reached an important milestone in a major project: The construction measures for 41 charging stations with a total of 122 charging points for the bus depot of an operator of public local transport began in The Hague. The subsidiary is also expanding its portfolio to include hydrogen infrastructure for needs that will grow in the future.

Furthermore, the experts from Daimler Buses intend to further develop the strengths in traditional services, both for electrically and conventionally powered vehicles. Such services include, for example, a dense network of workshops to ensure rapid repair of vehicles that have been involved in an accident or have broken down. For this, Daimler Buses continues to rely on service points of its own throughout Europe. The plans are to increase the availability of replacement parts even further with the help of 3D-printing methods.

#### **Digital Services are to Boost Efficiency for Customers and Businesses**

Daimler Buses is planning to further drive forward digital services and, in doing so, build on state-of-the-art analysis tools and artificial intelligence. For example, the company intends to create "digital twins" of its buses, across all series, in order to provide the best possible support to customers in the aftersales process. This involves complete digitalization of all buses that will be produced in the future, making it possible to identify more quickly worn parts or, in the event of damage, replacement parts.

In addition, the plans are to deploy digital bus assembly throughout production, meaning that all components of the respective series are compiled beforehand digitally and in the correct sequence for assembly, and an analysis of the individual process steps is performed. This makes it possible to optimize the assembly process beforehand to keep later process modifications to a minimum, which contributes to an even more efficient production process.

In addition, Daimler Buses is planning to introduce over-the-air updates (OTA) for its portfolio. The first vehicles are scheduled to be equipped with this technology from the middle of the decade enabling the buses to be updated to the most recent software version – quickly, simply and without a visit to the workshop. 📡



2018; intercity e buses are to follow as of the middle of the decade and electrified coaches by 2030. The manufacturer also intends to generate a significant contribution to the company's profitability through its product development: To this end, the plans going forward are for e buses to increasingly share the e-drivetrain, components and technologies, wherever possible, with the electrically powered trucks of the Daimler Truck Group. Daimler Buses will announce further news on its electrification strategy at its eMobility Days at the end of the year.

#### **Focus on E-systems and Traditional Services**

Daimler Buses intends to further intensify the business of its wholly owned subsidiary Daimler Buses Solutions GmbH relating to e systems from a single source. Operators of electric fleets are increasingly requesting all-in packages. By joining forces with Daimler Buses and other partners, Daimler Buses Solutions GmbH is able to provide all necessary turnkey e-infrastructure for depots. The company is currently working on more than 20 projects and has been serving



## ContiConnect Lite: New App Version Provides a Gateway into Digital Tire Management

Continental is employing sensor technology and data transfer to integrate tires into the vehicle network. Since the end of 2023, Continental has been supplying all the models in its Conti Urban tire family from the factory with latest-generation tire sensors. And now the Hanover-based solutions provider is using ContiConnect Lite to create a bridge between tire sensors and professional tire management. “ContiConnect Lite is a free app version of our digital tire management solution ContiConnect,” explains Clarisa Doval, Global Head of Digital Solutions at Continental Tires. “ContiConnect Lite revolutionizes tire management for our smart tire customers through a user-friendly app. The user simply registers online to gain instant insights into the tires’ performance.” ContiConnect Lite is a simple and free-of-charge gateway to selected ContiConnect functionality via smartphone. The new app version is also available for digital tire monitoring for agricultural tires, earthmoving tires and port operation tires.

ContiConnect Lite helps drivers to monitor the condition of their tires. This brings added value, in particular for smaller fleets using intelligent tires or Gen2 sensors. No additional hardware is required to make use of ContiConnect Lite. “After the self-registration is complete, the vehicle can be modified and connected via Bluetooth,” says Doval. This then also enables access to a limited version of the ContiConnect On-Site App. In total, five vehicles and three users can be registered free of charge. “When tire sensors identify a



change in pressure or temperature, drivers are instantly alerted via push notification, enabling immediate action.” The rear-time data from the tires enables predictive maintenance, cuts costs, saves energy and reduces emissions.

The Conti Urban bus tire, a proven specialist in mastering the demands of downtown traffic, is also an intelligent product. Since August 2023, Continental has factory-fitted the whole tire family with latest-generation sensors. Customers can choose from the Conti Urban HA3, Conti UrbanScandinavia HA3+ and Conti UrbanScandinavia HD3. This makes Continental the first manufacturer to offer an entire family of tires with sensors, allowing it to continue driving forward to fleet digitalization. Smart tires additionally

help municipalities and bus companies to ensure efficient vehicle operation with lower costs during the mobility and energy transition.

The pressure on companies to switch to alternative drive systems and digitalize their fleets is growing all the time. “With digital innovations like the intelligent Conti Urban tire, we’re empowering our clients to master the growing challenges they face,” says Doval. “Thanks to our ContiConnect On-Site App and our Conti Urban tire family, customers are able to retrieve tire data very easily and conveniently using any Bluetooth-enabled smartphone.” The various ContiConnect digital solutions are a major boon for efficient fleet management. “Integrating the new Conti Urban tire into our ContiConnect digital tire management platform enables both municipalities and public transport operators to provide a dependable, efficient, and eco-friendly public transportation system.”

Operational reliability, longer tire life and good utilization of vehicle capacity are also a great help in lowering carbon emissions and increasing fleet sustainability. At the same time, digital tire management makes it possible to minimize real-life fleet costs, in keeping with Continental’s holistic consultancy approach of Lowest Overall Driving Costs, or LODC for short. “Tire sensors also lay the groundwork for leveraging advantages like remote fleet monitoring and future predictive maintenance scheduling,” adds Doval. National and international Continental fleet customers have been enjoying the advantages of this sensor technology – which is now also being factory-fitted across a complete tire line (the Conti Urban) – for many years now. “Data indicates that ContiConnect can slash tire punctures by approximately 30 percent for users, yield a two percent savings in fuel, and boost tire lifespan by around ten percent,” calculates Clarisa Doval. ■







## An International Platform for the Regional Automotive Market

CAPAS continues to expand its global footprint, with Evamo, Fras-le, LPR, Lucas, TMD Friction and other international brands joining the show to bring their latest offerings to the local market. The exhibition leverages its geographical advantages through close ties with ASEAN member states, Central Asia, and the Middle East to facilitate communication between domestic and overseas industries. For example, it will invite these overseas government representatives, industry organisations and traders to take part in conferences, forums, business matching and market research.

Closer to home, local provincial and municipal pavilions from Anhui, Hebei, Liaoning, Tianjin, as well as Quanzhou cities will present new energy vehicle components in the Parts & Components zone.

The Accessories & Customising zone is set to target upcoming trends in the market to attract the attention on distributors, customising stores, experts and car owners. CAPAS will stage a virtual car racing competition with Red Bull and UP, also joining to share inside knowledge about customising technologies.

## Fringe Programme Focuses on Integration of Industry and Education to Promote Sustainable Development

CAPAS is preparing a comprehensive fringe programme based on the market situation and regional characteristics, keeping pace with industry trends and promoting business exchange. This year, the events will cover the international supply chain, new energy vehicle aftersales and talent nurturing, to name a few. 🚗



# CAPAS Celebrates 10 Editions of Advancing the Automotive Industry in Southwest China

The 10th edition of the Chengdu International Trade Fair for Automotive Parts and Aftermarket Services (CAPAS) will take place from 16 to 18 May 2024 at the Chengdu Century City New International Exhibition & Convention Center. Rooted in the Southwest China automotive industry, CAPAS has witnessed the rapid growth of the automotive industry in the region over the past decade. With over 650 exhibitors across 50 000 sqm of expected exhibition space, this edition will further integrate the regional resources from the government, industry players and media, to provide a platform for business exchange, trade investment and incorporation of industry and education.

Since the first edition in 2014, CAPAS has been focusing on the automotive industry chain and consumer market in Southwest China. More recently, the Chengdu-Chongqing Dual-city Economic Rim has guided regional development, including the advancement of connected mobility and the new energy vehicle supply chain. The show will spotlight products related to new energy vehicles and connected mobility, in addition to offering events and supportive services that promote these rising segments. It will pay extra attention to the incorporation of industry and education with training, contests and match-making to strengthen the supply chain and upskill the labour force.

## Chengdu-Chongqing Dual-city Economic Rim Catalysing the Advancement of new Energy and Connected Mobility

Southwest China's established ecosystem in the automotive industry demonstrates notable advantages for sourcing high quality products. There are 45 vehicle manufacturers and over 1,600 parts and components suppliers in the Sichuan-Chongqing region, meeting a localisation rate of over 80 percent. Furthermore, national policies aim to build up resources in the R&D and production of new energy and connected mobility.



## Spotlights on Malaysia Commercial Vehicle Expo 2024

Counting down the days until MCVE 2024 will open its doors, the excitement is back. With a number of new exhibitors joining, the event promises to be a boon for the commercial vehicle industry. Making their debut, Allegiance Malaysia Sdn Bhd is taking a sizable space of over 250 square meters to highlight a number of brands that the company represents. To make an impression, Allegiance Malaysia has opted to showcase innovative and unusual products. Not wanting to take away the surprise, Allegiance Malaysia will keep their exhibits a secret until the event.

Adding to their already impressive line-up is MAN Truck and Bus, which will also host a seminar for body builders and clients to learn about the latest developments in truck technology. Co-hosted during the afternoon will be Dr Richard J. Hanowski, Director- Division of Freight, Transit, & Heavy Vehicle Safety, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute. The title of his presentation will be “Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety: Best Practices and Promising Technologies”. This session will be by invitation only.

A number of exhibitors have indicated that they will be using the exhibition as a launchpad to introduce new products to the market. With new emission regulations and new drive train technology being introduced in Malaysia, visitors will be able to get first-hand information about these new vehicles. Being it upgraded or new-

to-the-market vehicles, the line-up of trucks and buses promises to excite.

Organisers of MCVE 2024 have ensured that there are plenty of areas for casual meetings. Both the R & R and Asian Trucker Networking night are meant as venues for delegates and exhibitors to mix, mingle, discuss and have a quantum of joy. Both, R & R and the Networking Night are sponsored by Hengst Filtration. Mister Coffee will be dispensing cuppas for those needing a caffeine fix. The Asian Trucker Networking Night will comprise of an entertainment programme as well as a presentation of awards by Hengst Filtration. Addressing a common question, Organiser of MCVE 2024, Stefan Pertz stated that indeed, the Asian Trucker Networking Night – Powered by Hengst – is open to everyone with no registration or payment required. “It is our way to say thank you to the industry and we believe we can all use a little breather,” he said.

For this year, Asian Trucker has also invited a number of authors of books dealing with transportation to join the publisher in their booth. Book worms will be able to grab interesting titles at special prices during the event. According to Pertz, the expo is to be a holistic one and oftentimes, one overlooks the businesses that are on the periphery, while contributing positively to the success of our transporters. 📖





# Events & Exhibitions

## Malaysia Commercial Vehicle Expo 2024

Date : 9 – 11 May 2024  
 Venue : Malaysia International Exhibition & Convention Centre  
 Contact : [www.mcve.com.my](http://www.mcve.com.my)

Malaysia International Exhibition & Convention Centre (MIECC) in Kuala Lumpur. Over 8 000+ square meters of exhibition space: MCVE is the largest exhibition dedicated to commercial vehicles in South-East Asia.

During the show, relevant government agencies, professional societies, and associations will join the organizer to provide updates on their products, services and the latest in trucking, bus business and public transport.

## Automechanika Ho Chi Minh Chity

Date : 20 – 22 June 2024  
 Venue : Saigon Exhibition and Convention Center (SECC)  
 Contact : <https://automechanika-hcmc.hk.messefrankfurt.com/>

Automechanika Ho Chi Minh City is a two-way gateway connecting the Vietnamese automotive market to the world for industry players to explore the massive business opportunities and develop the entire automotive value chain.

With its rapid economic growth and strategic reinforcement of its automotive supporting industries, Vietnam is becoming an increasingly compelling destination among firms eyeing international expansion. Automechanika Ho Chi Minh City sheds light on this transformation, highlighting the country's potential as both an enticing market and a production hub..

## IAA Transportation 2024

Date : 17 – 22 September 2024  
 Venue : Deutsche Messe, Hannover, Germany  
 Contact : <https://www.iaa-transportation.com/en>

IAA TRANSPORTATION is the leading international platform for buses, logistics, commercial vehicles, and the transportation sector. The IAA TRANSPORTATION is the place where the best minds in the transport and mobility industry come together to work on a



sustainable and innovative future. We look forward to presenting ground-breaking ideas, innovations, and technologies that will drive the industry forward in 2024.)

Under the motto "People And Goods On The Move," IAA TRANSPORTATION aims to advance climate neutrality in logistics and transportation with the help of innovative transport systems. Commercial vehicle and bus manufacturers, body and trailer manufacturers, micro-mobility companies, cargo bike and small vehicle providers, as well as their suppliers and tech companies, service providers, and startups come together in Hannover.

## The 29th Taipei International Logistics & IoT Exhibition

Date : 21 – 24 August 2024  
 Venue : Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center, Taiwan  
 Contact : <https://www.chanchao.com.tw/logistics/en/contact.asp>

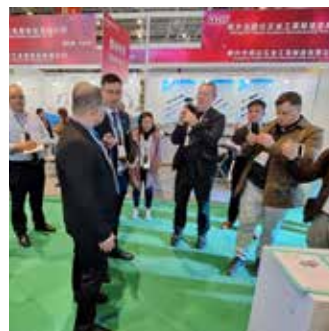
Sectors participating: Vehicles: Logistics Transport Vehicles: Truck, Refrigerated Truck, Trailer, Tractor, etc.

Handling & Lifting Equipment: Forklift, AGV, Pallet Truck, Transportation Cart, Trolley, Roll Container, Crane, Truck Crane, Overhead Crane, Aerial Lift Vehicle, etc.

Packaging Systems & Equipment: Transportation related System & Equipment, Intelligent Transportation System (ITS), Satellite Navigation Management System, Warehouse Management System(WMS), Enterprise Resource Planning, etc.

IoT System & Equipment: Warehouse Building Material & Equipment Component :

Freight Forwarder & Logistics Service Provider: Port & Customs Service, Shipping Agency, Ship Company, Aviation Industry, Sea & Air Freight Forwarding Industry, etc.





## MAN Malaysia Delivers First Double-decker Coach with ADAS Super Nice

*Super Nice Express Sdn Bhd is the proud receiver of the first MAN double-decker coach with Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS)*



**G**leaming in the sun, painted in custom 2K paintjobs, the new double-decker coach is part of a total of 10 new MAN coaches comprising five double-decker and five single deck units ordered by express bus company Super Nice. MAN Truck & Bus (M) Sdn Bhd (MAN Malaysia) handed these over on January 30th to leading express bus company Super Nice in Penang. Making them special is that they are all equipped with ADAS, as ordered by Super Nice in preparation to meet the growing demand for inter-state road travel.

### Safety on Board

The new double-decker coach is built on MAN's proven RR5 three-axle coach chassis and equipped with seven key driver assistance systems for optimum safety of the driver and passengers, namely:

1. Emergency Brake Assist (EBA)
2. Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC)
3. Lane Departure Warning (LDW)
4. Electronic Stability Program (ESP)
5. Tyre Pressure and Temperature Monitoring System (TPM)
6. Automatic Driving Light Activation (ADLA) and
7. Automatic Wiper Control (AWC)

In emergency situations, EBA works in three stages to intervene automatically to reduce torque, activate brake lights, deactivate cruise control, build up brake pressure and initiate full braking, if necessary, to prevent or reduce severity of collisions.

ACC is designed to prevent accidents by maintaining a safe distance from other vehicles in heavy traffic and low visibility driving conditions. The radar sensor considers the movement of the vehicles ahead, maintains the desired speed, and automatically adjusts the driving speed and distance.

LDW reduces the strain on the driver in long journeys as the camera continuously detects left and right lane markings and issues an acoustic or haptic warning if the vehicle drives over the lane marking without the turn signal switched on.





ESP reduces the possibility of rollovers in emergency manoeuvres. Sensors monitor the vehicle's speed, steering input, and individual wheel speeds and selectively applies braking to specific wheels to help the driver maintain control and stability at all times.

TPM's sensors mounted inside the tyres enables continuous monitoring of tyre pressure and temperature and warn the driver of any deviation. This can help reduce downtime from workshop visits and lower fuel consumption from under-inflated tyres. Temperature monitoring can also help avoid overheating of tyres that may result in fires or ruptures.

ADLA's sensor continuously detects the ambient brightness level and automatically adjust the headlamps to ensure optimum road illumination and visibility in all lighting conditions to reduce strain on the driver.

AWC automatically activates windscreen wipers when raindrops are detected to improve visibility, especially in heavy rain.



### Comfort on Board


Super Nice's new double-decker coach also features an updated TX9 body design by Penang-based coach body builder, TACT Coach Seat & Manufacturing Sdn Bhd. Making these coaches even more special are the private rooms on the lower deck. Passengers who opt for private rooms onboard can look forward to travelling in unique zero gravity seats that promise optimal blood circulation and less body aches and enjoy amenities such as their own personal entertainment systems, USB charging and a cold and hot water dispenser.

The private rooms, of which there are four, offer unique privacy as they are enclosed with a sliding door. According to Roy Chew Kok Yong, Managing Director of Express Seni Budaya, the private rooms have been created following market demand for a more luxurious experience on the road. He told Asian Buses there these are single-seaters as it is hard to sell a second seat if there would be only one of a couple-seater option sold.



MAN Malaysia Managing Director Andrew O'Brooks commended Super Nice for its commitment to road safety by specifying a comprehensive suite of ADAS for each of its new MAN coaches.

"Super Nice is demonstrating great foresight in protecting not only its drivers and customers by opting to equip its MAN coaches with ADAS. In doing so, it is also protecting its business as these advanced and intelligent driving systems can prevent accidents that can lead to costly repairs and unscheduled vehicle downtime," he said.

O'Brooks also highlighted that from this year onwards, all MAN Coach and Bus chassis would be equipped with low-emission and fuel-efficient EURO V engines as standard to help Malaysian bus companies embark on the sustainability journey. 





# Buses on Islands

*Asian Buses hopped to Langkawi to find out how transportation of passengers is done differently on islands.*



**B**uses and transport missions come in all shapes and forms. The job of bus operators is challenging as the movement of people is typically governed by tight schedules with cost pressure added. Adding a layer of complication, transporting people on, and between island and mainland is a different discipline altogether. As we discover, there is a lot of transportation going in Langkawi, however, it may be as difficult as moving people across itself. What we were told is that there is not much happening in terms of bus business and we wanted to find out if that was true.

Among others involved in the industry, Asian Buses also connected with one consultant, labelling himself "Botak", who offered insights beyond the obvious when it came to buses on Langkawi. To fully understand the issue with buses on this particular island, Langkawi, one has to roll back a bit and view the island with an

outside-in view. What makes Langkawi attractive as a tourist destination, its status of being a tax-free destination, is also an issue that makes operating buses and delivering spare parts very tricky. In his words, the mistake that businesses eyeing Langkawi as a business opportunity make is to see it as Malaysia. However, due to the tax-free status, one should see it as Langkawi as separate from Malaysia. Here is Malaysia and there is Langkawi.

## **Unique Situation Needing Unique Approaches**

Being outside Malaysian tax territory, driving a bus from the mainland onto the island is akin to driving it into a different country. To enter Malaysia, one has to fill out forms and file them according to the regulations. And with passengers come goods they may bring. Bringing goods to Langkawi is easier than sending them from the island to the mainland. Being a tax-free island, there is not much concern about what is being shipped onto the island. However, any goods moving the other direction would be treated as an export from Langkawi or, depending on where you are, import into Malaysia. This means, that goods imported from Langkawi to Malaysia are subject to taxes and duties. According to Botak, it is not something that makes it impossible to deal with; as long as proper licences and documentation is obtained, there are no obstacles. This



can be a tricky situation when passengers on buses bring extra luxury goods that could possibly have been purchased on the island. A recent case of legendary Arnold Schwarzenegger bringing a luxury watch into Austria is a good reference of this situation.

It is a costly mistake to make when bus operators do not consider the implication of Langkawi having a different status. Upon arriving at the ferry terminal, one may realise that there are specific documents need to be filed. If these cannot be produced in time, the ferry will sail, the approvals not be granted and the bus grounded for a night. Resulting, hotel costs may add up, the bus may be needed in another place, thus the operator may scramble to fulfil other jobs. Accessing Penang is easy, compared to Langkawi, as the bridges are open 24/7/365. Ferry schedules change according to the tides, and they have limited capacity. These complications may result in business relationships souring as there might be an argument about who is to pay for the additional costs.

The MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Events) industry is an important one on the island. Companies may opt to host their annual meetings, team building and training in Langkawi, as may couples opt for the island as their backdrop for their wedding. Smaller events may decide to travel by bus to get to the island. The event set-ups may require equipment that is not readily available on Langkawi, hence it needs to be trucked in. The art is then to have the equipment on site on time as people will fly in and the event will have to be held on a specific date. Moving goods across the island is another challenge. The entire island is one postcode and outside Kuah, there is houses scattered everywhere with no bigger settlements. A first-class global business could have its headquarters two minutes away from the international airport, being in the middle of nowhere.

According to the UNESCO, Langkawi UNESCO Global Geopark is located in the far north-western corner of peninsular Malaysia. Located in the northern State of Kedah, it is unique in the sense that it was formed on 99 islands that together made up the legendary Langkawi Archipelago. The natural landscape of Langkawi is a combination between highly vegetated hills of rainforest and some rather barren rocks.

The Geopark has the best-exposed and most complete Palaeozoic sedimentary sequence in Malaysia, from the Cambrian to the Permian period. Langkawi UNESCO Global Geopark was part of Sibumasu Block. During Early Permian, the Sibumasu Block broke out from Gondwanaland, rifting northward and collided with the East Malaya-Indochina Block to form the Southeast Asian mainland. Later, during the Mesozoic, the islands underwent a major tectonic event that resulted in the emplacement of its numerous granitic rocks. At the same time, the entire Peninsular Malaysia was uplifted, including the Langkawi islands. Much of the geological development was somewhat linked to what had happened in the old supercontinent Pangea and southern hemispheric Gondwanaland since more than 550 million years ago. What we have in Langkawi today is the combined result of these various processes and the ongoing weathering process that has taken place since the Langkawi land was brought to the surface around 220 million years ago.

Geodiversity and biodiversity are preserved in Machinchang Cambrian Geoforest Park, Kilim Karst Geoforest Park and Dayang Bunting Marble Geoforest Park. These geoforest parks also protect biodiversity in diverse habitats including mangroves, tidal flats, beaches, estuaries, coral reefs, caves, limestone and many more harbours for various life forms.

Every operator's nightmare is a bus broken down. Here again, the difference between the mainland and Langkawi is one that has significant implications. On the mainland, a breakdown means that one could be an hour away from help and attention to the problem. Whoever is coming to assist might not have the right tools or parts, thus requiring the broken-down vehicle to be towed to the nearest workshop. On Langkawi, one could be anywhere within 20 minutes. Simply sending a motorbike rider to check out the problem first to address the problem with the right solution may will take only a short time. Ensured that the problem is correctly identified, fixing any bus is done much faster than on the mainland. Downtime is short in terms of assessing the problems. However, a vehicle could be stuck in the workshop for up to three weeks due to spare parts not being available.



Again, Langkawi being a tax-free island, purchasing parts is a tricky situation. Parts imported from China or Thailand could end up being cheaper as they would not have been taxed up entry into Malaysia first before being sent to Langkawi. A part could also be faster in the hands of a customer if it is flown in from Thailand or Subang airport as that would circumvent the ferry trip. In a sense, Subang could be faster, closer than Alor Setar when it comes to the provision of parts or staff needed on Langkawi. Strangely, it appears that none of the bus makers operates a parts centre on the island.

#### Much Needed Support Arrives

Hino Motors Sales (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd. (Hino) proudly announced the official launch of its latest service outlet, the Hino Approved Service Outlet (HASO) in December 2023. This is also the first HINO HASO on Langkawi Island. This marks a significant milestone within Hino's dynamic dealer development program and it is the result of a strategic collaboration with Mara Liner Sdn Bhd (MLSB), a major industry player.

***It is all quite exciting for many of us as it is the opportunity to learn and understand BEVs and what it entails to bring and prepare for the successful bringing in of such vehicles - Hino Managing Director, Hiroshi Takahashi***

The launch of HASO here in Langkawi will expand its service to customers on the island. MLSB, a wholly-owned company of Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA), specializes in public transportation, logistics, and bus services covering all states in Peninsular Malaysia. This collaborative effort is poised to expand both parties' business capabilities. For Hino, it signifies an extension of its dealer service network enhancing its reach and customer service, after launching the previous HASO Maraliner Sdn Bhd at Muadzam Shah, Pahang in 2023. For those looking for a HINO vehicle, it is important to know that the HASO only functions as a service outlet. Customers can purchase HINO-branded vehicles through any HINO established 3S dealer on the mainland in Kedah or surrounding states for their use on Langkawi island.

Present to launch the HASO were Hino Managing Director, Hiroshi Takahashi, Hino Director, Ahmad Yasmin Yahya, MARA Chairman, Yang Berbahagia Datuk Wira Dr. Asyraf Wajdi bin Dato' Dusuki, MARA Deputy Director General, Yang Berbahagia Dato' Zulfikri bin Osman, MARA, Senior Director of Investment, Yahaya bin Sani as well as Chief Executive Officer of MLSB, Zachary Ismail.

In early 2021, HINO developed a new service outlet called HASO that aims to provide 100% after-sales support for customers and cover all HINO operation areas, especially in the service and repair areas. Hino emphasizes that in the commercial vehicle industry, Hino does not just sell vehicles; but also prioritizes after-sales service. This focus ensures the best services, keeps customer vehicles in optimal condition, and contributes to smooth logistics and business operations.

**Strategic Partnership**

HINO chose MARA Liner to be the HASO on Langkawi Island because they have the proven expertise to service buses. MARA Liner actively trains their personnel, and HINO believes that they have many years of experience in producing well-trained mechanics and technicians to service their buses. Extending this service level for bussess is not as challenging compared to appointing a car workshop to service commercial vehicles. HINO has recently launched a standardized service offer to all its customers where they aim to ensure the pricing of parts and service is fair and standard to all HINO customers throughout Malaysia.

***We are not able to give an actual amount, but it is estimated that around 80 percents of the buses, and half the of the trucks operating on Langkawi's roads are Hino-made.***

Hino's mission is clear: 'To be Malaysia's most Customer-Centric and reliable Commercial Vehicle company and make our country a better place to live by providing Best-fit Products and Total Support', which is also where Hino came up with the idea to develop HASO. Besides the newly launched HASO at Langkawi, Hino currently has another four operating HASOs, one in Sungai Petani, one in Pulau Pinang, one in Semenyih, and another one in Bandar Muadzam Shah, as Hino aims to support customers in sub-urban areas.

To achieve this, HINO is conducting studies of the market to tailor their offering to the specific needs of an application. At the end of 2021, HINO's Poncho was put to the test in an extensive trial to support the MRT in Kuala Lumpur as feeder buses. During the launch of Langkawi's HASO, two units of Poncho ZEV were handed over to MARA. These customised units are on loan to MARA Liner for a trial of electric buses. These buses are mainly running for HINO to collect data on suitability on Malaysian roads and hot and humid weather conditions. This trial is also part of MARA's efforts to understand the operational considerations for electric vehicles in this local market.

**Learning by Doing**

This trial initiated by MARA allows HINO Malaysia to understand the operational considerations of "importing" these electric vehicles. From customs







Local brands adjacent to the transport industry can be found on the island



The cause of a breakdown can be quickly identified. Fixing the problem can take time though as spare parts may need to be sourced and shipped to Langkawi

clearance to vehicle registration, the challenges faced were different from bringing in the Diesel version of the bus. As these buses were designed for Japan's domestic market and not for the Malaysian market, HINO's planning team is hoping to gain more information on the battery performance and EV systems in this hot weather and rainy conditions. "We hope this information will be valuable feedback for our colleagues in Japan to assist in the development of future products suitable for Malaysia and the Southeast Asia region."

Said Takahashi during the event "We are not able to give an actual amount, but it is estimated that around 80 percents of the buses, and half the of the trucks operating on Langkawi's road are Hino-made."

### Infrastructure Needed

Given that BEV are a new technology to Malaysia, there is a lot of groundwork to be done. For BEV operations, the charging infrastructure is very important. Unlike for passenger vehicles, the chargers used are of bigger capacity, a bigger area is needed as well as a higher roofed area. Most of the chargers we currently see in petrol stations, parking lots, or shipping malls are designed for passenger cars only. Trucks and buses are not able to access most of these areas. Bus and trucks operators have to consider preparing their own chargers compared to relying on public chargers. In addition, they may consider adding solar panels to supplement their industrial power supply.

Poncho ZEV uses the CHAdeMO charging method, which is different from the CCS2 that is used by European brands. There are fewer CHAdeMO chargers available compared to CCS2 chargers. For this trial, a CHAdeMO mobile charger will be used to charge the buses.



In discussion with Botak



Apart from the chargers, careful consideration and planning is needed to prepare for effective after-sales support of EVs. This encompasses various aspects, ranging from training sessions and spare parts preparation to periodic service planning. It is important to note that the after sales support can differ significantly from what is needed to support Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles. As this technology represents a departure from the familiar, technicians and support staff need to undergo specialized training to effectively navigate and address the unique challenges associated with this innovative system.

“It is all quite exciting for many of us as it is the opportunity to learn and understand BEVs and what it entails to bring and prepare for the successful bringing in of such vehicles,” Takahashi told Asian Buses.

**HASO Facilities in Langkawi**

Located at Lot 1827, KM 1, Jalan Air Hangat Kuah, 07000 Pulau Langkawi, Kedah, the outlet covers 12 000 sqft. The vast space is ideal for customers as there is ample parking space for vehicles coming in for servicing.

They are equipped with four service bays and the latest equipment and tools for fast and efficient servicing. Some of the available equipment includes the latest HINO Diagnostic system, DX III. Their technicians are trained and experienced in servicing and repairing commercial vehicles which is not easily found here on Langkawi Island. While waiting for their truck or bus to be serviced, drivers can relax at the customer lounge area within the facility, which offers complimentary refreshments and free WiFi.

Heading the service outlet is Maintenance Repair Overhaul (MRO) Manager, Mohd Azlan bin Abdul Latif, and his well-trained team, dedicated to providing a comprehensive range of HINO services, including 24-hour breakdown support.

**Bus Ecosystem on Langkawi**

While a few big events may be in the public eye of the entire region, it is small events that happen every weekend. Those wanting the event to look like Langkawi will ensure it happens in Langkawi, as opposed to have an event in an anonymous location, which could be a hotel in Kuala Lumpur. Any equipment that needs to be shipped in competes for space on the ferry as well as being locked up for longer than if it was used on the mainland, due to the nature of Langkawi being a tax-free island serviced by ferries. Oftentimes, people are then taken by surprise when the goods are shipped back to the mainland. For instance, one may hold an event to







Over the last 30 years, however, the travel pattern has changed. Instead of large groups, 40 – 80 people, travelling together, not knowing each other, it could now be two to four people knowing each other travelling together. The individual traveller may want to explore specific sights, different from what others want to see. Consequently, taxi-vans are more popular, whereas big busses are not in high demand anymore. With travellers also breaking up into small groups to dine in places that suit their lifestyle, the idea of having pre-organised, large tour groups may be quickly waning.

Three days of investigating the industry in Langkawi has shown that there is indeed a lot of passenger transport going on, however it is difficult undertakings to get goods on and off the island. Opportunities seem to be presenting themselves in abundance and challenges can be overcome with smart solutions that offer customers the best possible service despite all the obstacles that are inherent in the nature of transportation on an island. 📌



showcase luxury goods, which can enter the island without tax. Sending them back however, would require them to be declared as they are an importation. Suddenly, a bag for a few thousand Ringgit Malaysia may attract hundreds in taxes to be paid. Unless, of course, someone like Botak handles the temporary importation the correct way, using the correct process.

Botak opines that Langkawi may be ripe for more scheduled buses, allowing for tourists and locals alike to be make use of the flexibility that public transport would offer. However, he highlighted that the location of the stops would be crucial for the success of such services. Buses could even be dual-purpose: in the morning and afternoon they ferry workers and school kids and between these runs, they could be deployed to service the hotels as shuttle buses. “At the moment, there is no bus service from the airport for example. Imagine, you have four or five flights arriving at the same time, then you quickly run out of taxis and Grab cars.” With the airport being a natural hub, it could be worthwhile considering adding bus shuttles to the main tourist areas.

Most visitors to Langkawi would arrive during their weekend, when they only get to experience only the coastal road between Kuah and Chenang. As most of the local passenger movements happen between Monday and Thursday, tourists may get the impression that there are no buses on the island and that there are no school kids going to school either. Schedules are shifted, due to the fact that Langkawi is following a different working week. Alternative ways to experience the island have been tried: camping sites sprung up, but could not sustain as the infrastructure to support this type of traveller was insufficient. However, if campsites and connectivity would improve, this could be a viable sub-sector for the island and vehicle makers to capitalise on.

Tourist buses would be more visible on the weekends, when the tourists arrive in high numbers. “Most days, they would be parked and would not do anything,” Botak says. The needs of groups travelling has also changed. Earlier, it was common for large groups to travel in buses, arriving on certain days. These groups would then be visiting specific places and the bus would be on a pre-planned route.



## Looking Back at 10 Years of Hengst Asia Pacific

*We look at what made Hengst Asia Pacific a success and how the business has grown over the past decade, developing from a one-man show to having branched out into other countries.*



The 10th anniversary of Hengst Asia Pacific is celebrated this year. Not only during this year's Malaysia Commercial Vehicle Expo, but also in other events around the region as the brand enters their second decade with a local presence. What started as a strategic consideration with just one headcount has since grown into a force to be reckoned with, now having a footprint in India and Indonesia as well. We revisit their office in Singapore to have a look at this important milestone, talking to Mr Frank Maergner, Sales Director, Hengst Asia Pacific Pte Ltd, who has been responsible for the subsidiary since its inception.

***This has proven that we need to be close to the customers and the market.***

Revisiting the situation in 2014, the decision to anchor Hengst's business in Asia stemmed from a patchiness in the sales patterns. To address the issue of unpredictability and fluctuation in business, Hengst initially relied on agents and representatives. However, growth had not been as expected and thus, the decision was made to establish an own entity to be present in the market and to provide first

hand support from the brand. "We have also tried to grow through exclusive arrangements, however, the distance to the customers was still stifling the developments," Maergner says. The plan was hatched to set up an office without any production attached as a pilot project to see if such a supporting structure would work. And work it did. Within the first two years, Hengst's business in the region already doubled; after that, the business kept on growing beyond expectation. Today, the Hengst office in Dubai is modelled after the successful implementation of the Singapore office.

"This has proven that we need to be close to the customers and the market." Having lived in Singapore and Australia before, handling import and export matters, Maergner was identified as the ideal candidate to set up and operate the local entity as the business model called for distribution of goods without a local warehouse to keep stock. Another crucial aspect that Hengst identified is that customers in Southeast Asia value long-term relationships with suppliers. Thus, having a local presence, with someone staying permanently, gave Hengst an edge as some of the Hengst customers already knew Maergner. This, as Maergner points out, is something that forms the fabric of the family-run business: throughout the organization, the key decision makers have not changed in a decade. Thus, clients can easily predict that way Hengst would act as a professional company. "This offers a consistency, that many others cannot offer. When Managing Directors of local offices rotate, the way the company behaves changes."



Now in charge of 12 countries, the Singapore office is strategically located. The decision to open the regional office in Singapore was based on the fact that the country is corruption-free, offers easy ways of opening businesses and accounts while providing fast access to the surrounding countries. Hengst's clients also like to visit the island state because of the ease of doing business. According to Maergner, the higher cost of locating the regional office in Singapore is offset by these advantages. Considering the competition between Hong Kong and Singapore, Hong Kong was not chosen as the location for the regional office as Hengst already had an established office with production in China and having two offices in one country, although a huge one, would not have made sense in the context of the expansion plans laid-out.

Those who followed the development of Hengst in the region will have noticed that there has been a shift in how the business operates. Initially, Maergner was a one-man band, which had to advertise the presence of the brand while immediately also ensuring that sales grew. "To sustain our growth, we also needed to identify suitable partners and staff to hire," he reflected. At first, his daily life was very much a matter of door-to-door sales. Again, Maergner emphasised that the market needed to know that the brand is set for long-term, not just a fly by night idea. Over time, the team grew and with that, the structure needed to be adjusted. Being close to the local market also meant that Hengst had to adapt the product portfolio. Through a product manager that was hired, the offering throughout the region was tweaked to meet the needs of the local markets.

Today, there are specific products Hengst is selling here, that are not available in other markets. An Asia-specific product catalogue marked another important milestone. Today, there are seven headcounts and Maergner expects that further hiring will be required to deal with the newly added products from the acquisition of Bosch-Rexroth Hydraulic Filtration segment. "Today, my role is much more strategic, identifying long-term opportunities." As an example of the synergies achieved is the creation of the Hengst-branded lubricants, which originated from Singapore as an idea. This example goes to show that there are tangible benefits in having localised operations, which can deviate from the standard product range to some extent.

***This was an eye-opener as we learned that we can achieve more if non-competing brands come together to push an agenda that affects the entire industry.***

A lot has happened with Hengst Asia Pacific in the past 10 years and reflecting on this, Maergner points out several highlights that have occurred during this period. Being able to leave a mark at a large-scale event, an event hosted in Myanmar in 2018 and the Malaysia Commercial Vehicle Expo during which Hengst was present



**Product Display during the Fake vs Original event May 2023 Right Discussion Panel during the Fake vs Original Event in May 2023.**

with an own booth were memorable events that have made an impact on the business and Maergner himself. As an event addressing local needs, the mini-expo in Myanmar had an impact as it allowed the brand to better understand the needs of the clients there. Another ground-breaking event that has left an impression was the "Spot the Fake" event, held in Malaysia in May 2023 as it was the first time Hengst partnered with other brands to co-host an important session that added value to customers and business partners alike. "This was an eye-opener as we learned that we could achieve more if non-competing brands come together to push an agenda that affects the entire industry." Not surprisingly, the Pandemic marks a period of time Hengst Asia Pacific calls their most difficult. Such a situation being unique and never anticipated, the course of action to be charted was not pre-defined. By his own admission, the uncertainty resulted in reactions that may not have been fully thought through. "Maybe we were too quick to respond to the effects of the lockdowns. Perhaps we should have analysed things a little bit longer before we introduced measures."

Now established in the region, Hengst Asia Pacific's strategic direction may differ vastly from that of other brands in the region. In Maergner's view, there is no market that is not attractive. In his words, it may even be a better value proposition to be active where others are not as a concentration of competing brands makes it harder to sell one's own products. "We also made a promise of

Maergner at the Malaysia Commercial Vehicle Exhibition 2022



long-term support to our partners. Therefore, we are still active in Myanmar, visiting clients there and offering help where we can to our partners in the country.” Having seen the plan pan out, Maergner admits that he and his team could have been even more aggressive. Would he start over again, he would hire more people sooner and implement key projects earlier, however given the risk assessment paradigm at the time, Maergner and his team are confident to say that they have done the best they could, given the circumstances.

Until today, Hengst does not maintain a warehouse in the region. Having assessed the situation and working closely with the local distributors and dealers, it was found that there really is no need to stock parts locally. Dealers would plan ahead and order in bulk; these are orders that can be fulfilled by shipping just the quantities ordered without having to have a costly step of storing them in between. In Maergner’s view, there is no value-add in having a local warehouse as the nature of their client’s business does not support having one. However, when it comes to hydraulic components from the former Bosch-Rexroth business, then there might be a need to keep key components close by. When a hydraulic pipe bursts, it needs to be replaced right there and then. Meanwhile, the replacement of filters is a scheduled service whereby the parts can be obtained from a local dealer without any rush.

After the foray into Southeast Asia via Singapore, Hengst has now set up a subsidiary in Indonesia. Being the largest market in the region, it is to report to Singapore while servicing companies Indonesia, supporting them with import services as even large companies in Indonesia may not have the required licenses. Indonesia was chosen as it is a large country with matured industries.

Looking ahead, Hengst is changing its product line in accordance with the current needs. With electrification, a shift towards other product ranges takes place. However, with an expertise in high efficiency filtration, management is confident that the positioning as filtration expert is the right one.

“As we are seeing now, electrification in Europe is also under scrutiny and what we can expect is that it will take a longer time to really take a hold here in Asia.” Meanwhile, Maergner points out that there is still a growing need for filtration products and education around



Myanmar Event 2018 with 350 participants





**Left: Sandip Mehta (Managing Director Hengst India)**  
**Middle: Christopher Heine (CEO Hengst)**  
**Right: Mr. Rajinder Singh Sachdeva COO, VE Commercial Vehicles Limited. A JV of Volvo and Eicher.**

it in the region. Hengst Asia Pacific is now getting more active with local association and organisations in order to offer users help in understanding how to best choose their filters. The use of substandard filters may cause long-term damage, something that most operators are not aware of and have never looking into. With own foundry and metal workshops, a visit to a Hengst production is typically an eye-opening event where visitors then fully comprehend the significance of using high-tech, high-end filters to improve their business.

Continuing on the trajectory of growth, Hengst opened a production facility in India on 14th May 2024. "Being close to the market allows us to serve the specific needs of our customers. What is important to point out is that the quality is always the same, it is always top-notch. We produce locally as typically, only the labour component makes a difference in the pricing. However, most of what goes into a filter is material and machinery and is controlled by the global quality control, based in Hengst's Germany headquarters."

Commemorating the anniversary, Hengst Asia Pacific will be participating in the most number of events ever this year, getting closer to the market, nurturing relationships and being there for customers. 

Hengst Filtration opens site in Bengaluru, India  
 The filtration specialist will manufacture products from all business areas in Bengaluru and thus primarily serve the Indian market. However, the potential also extends far beyond that.

Hengst Filtration has opened a new site in Bengaluru (Bangalore), India, taking a further step in its international transformation "from automotive supplier to filtration specialist for many areas of application". More than 90 colleagues, customers, partners and representatives of the press attended the opening ceremony at the new plant. The company is already producing automotive parts and supplying to the industry and Hengst will produce and sell filtration solutions for the automotive sector, hydraulic applications, medical technology and various branches of industry here - primarily for the Indian market.

"India represents a significant growth opportunity for Hengst Filtration. The country's growing economy and increasing demand for filtration systems across all industries make it an ideal location for our expansion plans. We are confident that our innovative filtration solutions for industry and the environment will be well received in India," says Christopher Heine, CEO of Hengst Filtration.

The site will be headed by Managing Director Sandip Mehta, who has 28 years of experience in the automotive and industrial sectors. "From automotive to medical technology, our mission is clear: to reduce emissions, protect machines and improve air quality for the people of India. Each of our products acts as a catalyst for positive change and promotes a cleaner, greener planet," says Mehta: "India has exceptional manufacturing capabilities and a skilled workforce. They enable us not only to serve the domestic market but also to expand into international markets."

This latest Hengst facility is located at: 47 KIADB Hi-Tech Aerospace Park Yelahanka Taluk Bangalore Karnataka 562149 India



# Volvo Buses Launches New Global Electromobility Platform

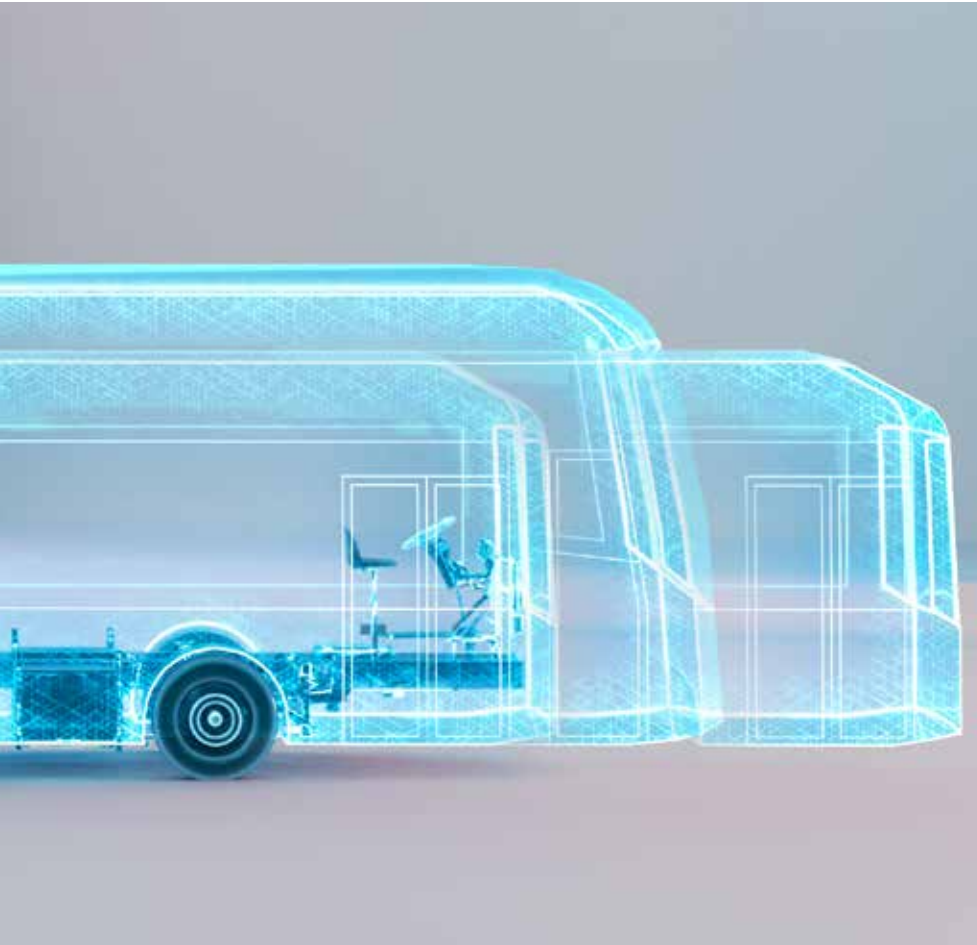


**V**olvo Buses extends its worldwide electromobility offer to include operations outside and between cities. The new Volvo BZR Electric is a global platform for city, intercity, and commuter operations. It is offered in several configurations to maximize the possibilities for efficient, sustainable, and profitable traffic for operators around the world.

Volvo Buses' low-floor electric buses have been very successful; they are in daily operation in 25 countries, and the new BZR Electric platform builds on that success. "We have a firm ambition to accelerate our efforts to meet the global demand for electromobility solutions. Therefore, it's







logical to extend our electromobility offer to include solutions for intercity, transit, and commuter operations. The BZR Electric is a globally offered platform that we can adapt to the variety in requirements of customers worldwide. It's another major step for us in our efforts to provide efficient and sustainable transport solutions – today and in the future,” says Anna Westerberg, president of Volvo Buses.

#### **Multi-purpose and versatile**


The Volvo BZR Electric is a flexible platform that comes as high-floor or low-entry, in two or three-axle configurations, with a single or dual motor driveline. It features a modular energy storage system where the number of batteries can be adjusted to match different types of operations. The Volvo BZR Electric is based on a Volvo Group common e-mobility architecture. This means that major components and sub-systems are manufactured in large volumes, which is an advantage when it comes to spare parts commonality and logistics. This in turn means more operator uptime.

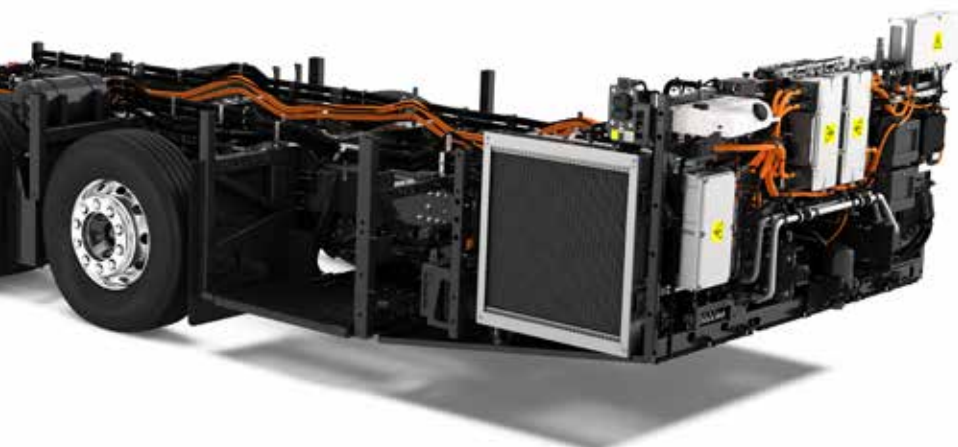
#### **A concept for the future**

The BZR platform is built for future flexibility. It is designed to enable versions for both Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and, later on, coach applications. At launch, the platform accommodates lengths from 9.5 to 15 meters, a maximum weight of 27,000 kg and traction power up to 400kW, or 540 hp. In combination with the modular battery arrangement of up to 540 kWh, the Volvo BZR Electric is suitable for most of the applications in extended city and intercity operation. “Electromobility is still a growing, fast-moving business, and at Volvo Buses we have gathered more than a decade of first-hand experience, together with customers and partners. With the launch of the Volvo BZR Electric, we’re convinced that we now have a product and a complete offer that will be a long-term solution for customers worldwide,” says Anna Westerberg.



#### **Enhanced safety for all road users**

The Volvo BZR Electric comes with all of Volvo Buses’ active safety systems. These include several safety features with a special focus on the protection of vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians. One example is the collision warning system. It doesn’t only react to vehicles, which is the legal requirement, but also to pedestrians and cyclists. The safety systems exceed the new EU regulations, as well as the legal requirements of most countries outside the EU. 





## Taking Strides in Bus Building

**T**act Coach & Seat Manufacturing Sdn Bhd has established itself as a bus manufacturer of choice since 1991. Providing bus manufacturing, bus seat design and manufacturing, truck refurbishing and bus repair services. According to Tan Yen Hong, Business Director of Tact Coach & Seat Manufacturing, the business may be one of the last ones still standing in the north of Malaysia. Injecting new ideas, Tan has a few ideas to boost the business to new heights. His assurance is that it “Be building buses from scratch or repairing existing fleets of buses, coaches or trucks, we at Tact Coach will always provide you with the Best Solution and Quality Assurance.”

Coincidentally, the business started in the same year Tan was born. Today, he is joining forces with his father’s team to further inject growth and innovation into the fleeting business. Tact Coach traces its roots back to an initial collaboration with the express bus service provider Grassland. Tact Coach was the builder of record for the business to provide not only the coaches, but also the seats. “Right now, we are looking at forming a strategic partnership which will allow us to leapfrog the business.” According to Tan, the factory is running at full capacity following the placement of an order for ten buses by SuperNice. Besides these buses, Tact Coach also fabricates buses for other customers, for instance stage buses.

The benefit of having said strategic partner on board is that Tact Coach can get future ready. As Tan explained, through this partnership capacity can be increased while

at the same time, crucial investments can be made. What is needed now is to invest in automation, ESG compliance and ISO certification to continue staying competitive. This is especially important as Tact Coach exports contingents of buses to Singapore, namely for Grassland in Singapore, complying with the stringent requirements of the island nation. Updating the production is also important in view of bus chassis becoming more advanced. Skills and machinery need to be enhanced in tandem with the requirements of the technically more advanced chassis with ADAS and modern engines.

“What sets us apart is that we design and manufacture our own seats. The benefit of doing so may not be that obvious right away: it allows us to adjust the space so that we can cater to the



needs of operators when it comes to the layout and number of seats on board.” The space inside the coach is limited and by tailoring the bus seats to the specific needs of the operator, the space will be maximized. This way, Tact Coach is able to maximise the number of seats anchored onto a coach. Such in-house capability have also allowed Tact Coach to produce customised seats, needed for handicapped passengers.

Designing the seats in-house allows Tact Coach to offer the safest possible seats. Current seats offered feature a three-point seatbelt, as we know them from passenger cars. In addition, the design of the Tact Coaches’ own seats allows for proper and improved anchoring of the seat to the floor. Tan points out that this is a crucial aspect of bus travel. In case of an accident, passengers need to be held in place to avoid injuries.

Asked about the future of bus travel, Tan points out that there is still a lot of potential. With more airlines now applying for landing permits, there would be an increased need for last mile transportation and shuttle buses

that take passengers from the town to the airport. Tan opined that there is a need for the government to carefully assess the situation. Citing the situation with he MyAirline airline, he pointed out that transportation needs to be sustainable. “Yes, certainly, people want the cheapest possible way to travel, however, it needs to be sustainable. Look at the fiasco with MyAirline: everyone loses out, from passengers to investors.” As an overall trend, Tan observes that the pandemic has created a heightened sense for personal safety, which has triggered them to equip the private rooms on board the double deck coach recently delivered to SuperNice with air purifiers.

Amidst all the pressure, Tan enjoys moments that are truly memorable. According to him, the business is very much people oriented. “I like to be around people as they are the ones that make all of this happen.” The incidents that are stuck in his head are the ones where his team is taking great pride in their work. Developing a new double-deck coach, Tan found his workers after midnight snapping pictures with their families, sending pictures back to far



away friends and family. It is this kind of pride in their work that lets Tan know that what he does is having a positive impact on other peoples’ lives. “I take pride in the work we do, and such situations are the ones that drive me.”



# The Role of Lubricants in a Drastically Changing Environment



**P**ETRONAS Industrial Solutions offers expert solutions for industries ranging from construction to mining, agriculture, power generation and manufacturing. All businesses share the need to be productive, improve efficiency, adhere to environmental pressures, and remain resilient in a rapidly changing environment, and this is where PETRONAS Industrial Solutions comes in. Asian Buses spoke to Uday Kumar, Group Industrial Managing Director, PETRONAS Lubricants International in this exclusive interview.

**AT:** Can you provide an overview of PETRONAS Industrial Solutions and its role within its various industrial sectors it prioritises?



**UK:** As the world comes together to tackle the climate crisis, businesses need strong partners to help them develop the resilience they need in sustainable ways.

PETRONAS Industrial Solutions works as one with our customers to strengthen their operations from within, developing a deep understanding of their needs and delivering with them innovative services and energy-efficient solutions that sets a path to carbon neutral future.

We stay future focused to deliver products and services that strengthens progressive businesses from within, through partnership and constant technological innovation.

**AT:** What recent developments or projects has PETRONAS Industrial Solutions been involved in that have had a significant impact on the industry?

**UK:** Bright minds at our R&T centres around the world are constantly pushing at what's possible, to develop end-to-end fluid technology solutions that set our customers on a clear path to carbon neutral operation.



Our approach to fluids is to focus on the whole system performance to protect and prolong the working life of every part of our customers' vehicle or machinery. We strive to develop lubricants that lead the field and earn the all-important endorsements of leading Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) while minimising our impact on the environment.

Recently, there is a renewed interest in re-refined base oils (RRBOs) along with the increasing desire for businesses to protect the environment. Moreover, technology and processes have improved tremendously to make this a viable option and help address the disposal challenges for used engine oils while reducing CO2 emissions. Currently in India, we have started our RRBO initiative this year to cover our entry tier products in the country to meet the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Guidelines of the Indian Government in reference to circular economy. The Guideline mandated five percent RRBO implementation in FY2024 and up to 40 percent in the next five years in the Finished Goods.

As RRBO gains acceptance and adoption around the world, this is one of the areas where we are keen to explore and see how we can make RRBO viable for other products in our portfolio spanning diverse applications, going forward.

**AT:** How does PETRONAS Industrial Solutions prioritise sustainability and environmental responsibility in its operations and projects?

**UK:** As part of the PETRONAS Group, our commitment to sustainability starts at the core of our operations and extends throughout our value chain.

Since the environmental footprint of our products is usually decided at the design phase and its biggest impact coming from the use of our products in our customers' operations, PETRONAS Industrial Solutions formulate high-performance, bespoke fluids that are dedicated to CO2 emission reduction and manufactured in an increasingly low CO2 emission environment.

Our lubricants and functional fluids are also engineered to deliver superior performance even under the most severe conditions and are made to protect and prolong the lifespan of our customer's vehicle and machinery. This not only drives efficiency and reliability, but also lowers costs, reduces waste and overall impact on the environment.

On top of this, we also provide PETRONAS Expert Solutions to our customers – an insight-driven services that help them improve reliability and reduce costs at the core of their operations, allowing them to do more, use less inputs and grow faster.



**AT:** Can you discuss the technological innovations that PETRONAS Industrial Solutions has implemented to enhance efficiency and safety?

**UK:** If there's one thing that always gets in the way of progress, it's inefficiency. We know that businesses need products and solutions they can trust every day to keep their machines, equipment, and people they rely on working their best. With this resilience comes reassurance that frees up their thinking time and give them opportunities to concentrate their attention in areas that really matter – growth.

For example, we know that for bus owner operators and fleet managers, every trip is a battle to stay strong in the face of ever-increasing demands. We know that their engine oil needs to be incredibly durable as their bus engines get pushed even harder as journeys become longer





and timescales become shorter. To withstand this hostile environment deep inside the engine, over long distances, and in stop/start operating conditions, the lubricant needs to be incredibly resilient.

We formulated PETRONAS Urania with StrongTech to create an engine oil that is engineered to stay stronger for longer, forming a uniquely strong fluid film to extend drain intervals and engine life, maximising performance and profitability and giving the core strength for commercial vehicle owners and fleet managers to keep moving.

We are happy to share the positive result of a fleet owner in Malaysia. A four-month field trial conducted on four of the company's Volvo trucks demonstrated that one of our products, the PETRONAS Urania 3000LS 15W-40 extended the current Oil Drain Interval (ODI) for the company by 30 percent, from 30 000km to 40 000km or an additional one month. The customer is satisfied with the test result, which has successfully increased its fleet operation by 20 percent, and reduced the service cost by 30 percent, resulting in significant savings on the Total Cost of Ownership. This is just one example of how the performance of our lubricants benefit our customers.

**AT:** What are some of the key challenges and opportunities that

PETRONAS Industrial Solutions faces in the ever-evolving business landscape?

**UK:** Moving forward, decarbonisation, electrification, sustainability, hybridisation, and digitisation will continue to shape the industries of tomorrow. Additionally, businesses that can manage their partnerships to complement their existing capabilities will have a better advantage in an increasingly competitive and volatile market environment.

In view of this, PETRONAS Industrial Solutions will continue to work as one with our customers to strengthen their operations from within. Our technologists and business experts will continue to use insights to improve our products and services in ways that will help businesses progress. Operating in the state-of-the-art labs, we will continue to develop lubricants that lead the field and earn the all-important endorsements of leading OEMs.

Since sustainability often goes together with efficiency, we are determined in engineering bespoke fluids that is focused on whole system performance and tailored to our customers' needs.

Our services will also be as important as our products going forward since

what matters most to businesses is always moving forward towards their goal. After all, Expert Solutions is one of our ways of partnering with customers to overcome their challenges together by harnessing the power of insights for their potential and progress.

**AT:** Could you share some insights into PETRONAS Industrial Solutions' future plans and strategies for growth and innovation in 2024?

**UK:** Although Agriculture, Construction, Mining, General Manufacturing, and Power Generation are among our priority segments. PETRONAS Industrial Solutions also offer complete product portfolio for other industries such as Cement, Steel, Pulp & Paper and Automotive Parts Manufacturing. We also have in the pipeline new projects for the Wind Segment, a sub-segment of Power Generation industry.

Additionally, with the increasing adoption of robotics in the General Manufacturing, we will also be focusing our efforts on formulating specialised greases for robotics. At the same time, we will be investing in the circular economy with the integration of RRBO (re-refined base oil) in our product portfolio in our efforts to drive industrial resilience and deliver sustainable results. ■



## Getting Associated

**W**hat can one voice achieve? One would argue not much. A few voices are easier heard. If an industry speaks with one voice, united in the many voices that each and every stakeholder has, it will become impossible to ignore. Such is the power of an industry association. If one of us is facing a problem, it may only be an isolated case, something that we don't have to listen to. However, if an association brings forward the joint plight of an entire industry, these voices can no longer be ignored.

There are associations for most industry sectors. Some are very specific, others are a little bit more general. Finding an association that best represents one's interests should not be difficult. I know of a number of transporters that have joined several associations. Should there be no fitting association, one can also start one. Luckily, we are operating in a free economy, which encourages the participation of the industry in shaping the country's policies and rules. Oftentimes have I heard that through the active engagement of associations with the authorities a better solution to problem was found.

Seeing the benefits of associations working in the background, I am always surprised though how relatively few members some of them have. Oftentimes, the roster of members spans just a few hundreds where there are thousands of companies that would fit the profile of being a member. Any association will be a good source of information and help if needed. It should be an easy decision for a bus operator to join forces with an association. Is it a case of associations not advertising themselves enough? I am not sure that this the answer as any transporter should have the affiliation with an appropriate association on their agenda.

I advocate not only being a member, but also actively contributing to the work of associations. Admittedly, all of us have day jobs and having more work is not necessarily a desired outcome. However, if everyone chips in a bit, to their best abilities, then an association will become a very powerful instrument to shape the industry. Getting involved can be very rewarding: seeing how the effort pays out, pushing an agenda, can be a worthwhile goal to pursue. Paying member fees on time would be the least one can do as that would allow for others to get active. While an association, by nature, is not a for-profit organisation, there is always a cost associated with the running of such organisation.

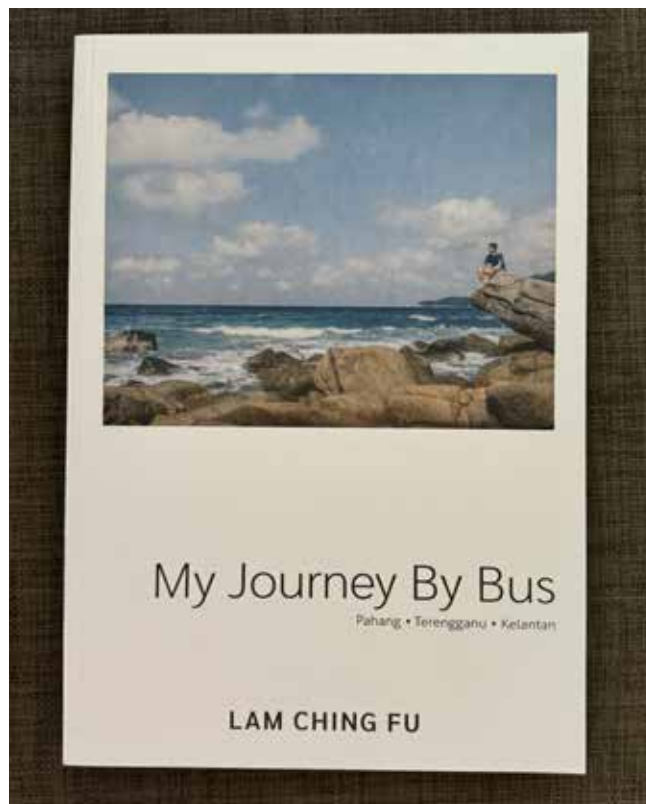
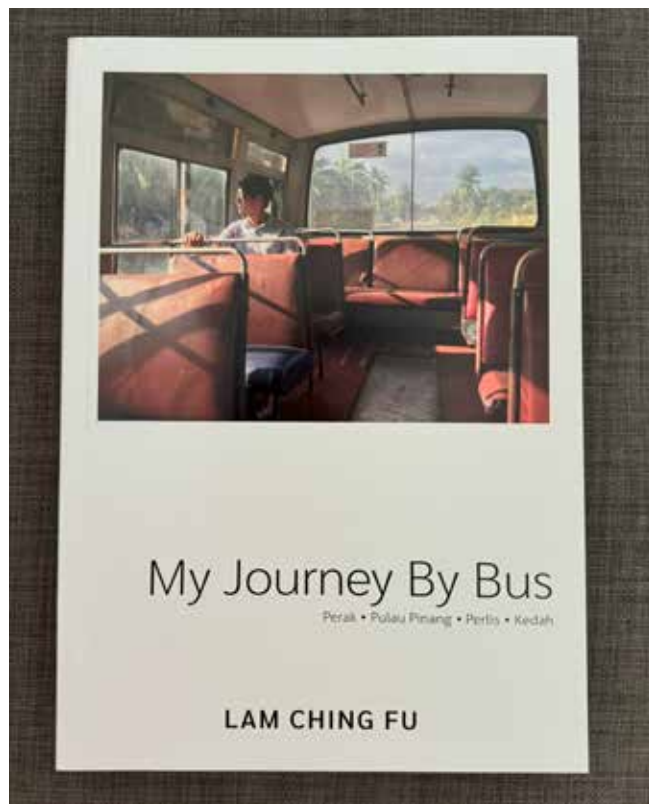
Even if one is not in the exact business an association is representing, it may be worthwhile getting involved. As a business dealing with the transport industry, we have benefitted greatly from getting involved. One aspect is the access to information; being up to date is important as it allows for forward planning and thinking. The same would apply for any supplier to the transport industry,



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being able to harvest vital insights and thus being able to react. Some associations may not be very open to the idea of signing up members that are not at the core of the business. However, taking into account how any government decision regarding the transportation industry eventually trickles down to the suppliers to the industry, it is a valid idea to have them heard as well (in my view).

As I am typing this out, the new fuel subsidy scheme is being rolled out. Other initiatives will follow. Some may be lauded while others will draw the ire of the industry as it may not have been consulted. With the involvement of those affected, government policies would surely gel better with the industry. It is implicit the government would act in the best interest of the most people. However, they may not have all the right information or may think that an opinion is not very valid as there is not enough voices behind it. Hence, I would hope that more people get associated in a bit to actively shaping our transport industry and country. ■



## FuFu Goes on another Bus Tour

Following the release of his highly acclaimed first book retelling his epic bus tours across Malaysia, Ching Fu has published his second book about bus travel.

A passionate advocate of public transportation, Ching Fu studied Civil and Environmental Engineering at Japan's Hiroshima University and went on to do his master's degree in urban planning at the University of Applied Sciences Frankfurt studying the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) in South America. Upon returning to Malaysia, he worked as a Transport Engineer for the SBK MRT project. After realising that himself has travelled around the world but not Malaysia, FuFu immediately decided to explore Malaysia right after resigning from his job. He strongly felt that he must travel by bus to know and understand better our bus system, meanwhile to see the bus coverage and which places he gets to travel by bus.

In a fast-paced world, Lam Ching Fu is taking the slow travel movement to new heights by travelling to Malaysia's small towns using public buses. Unearthing many hidden gems along the way, his second book, My Journey By Bus | Pahang . Terengganu . Kelantan, contains 37 anecdotes on his unforgettable experience, accompanied



by beautiful illustrations, user-friendly maps and charming stories. The goal is to get more people on board buses and promote Malaysia's under-the-radar sleepy but charming towns. To do his part, Ching Fu poured his entire savings into his passion project (self-published his journeys) in hopes that more Malaysians and international tourists will visit small towns by bus.

As a spin-off, FuFu has also created a set of high-quality print postcards showing buses that have been part of the country's heritage. 🇲🇾





By: Songyot Kamontavikun

## Vintage Toyota Spotted

The bus is produced by TOYOTA, model code FB80. The vehicle in the picture was produced in 1963 and is used for transporting passengers in Japan. We may have seen buses like this in period Japanese movies. Or in retro Japanese cartoons This car is on display at the Toyota Museum in Nagoya, Japan. 🇯🇵



## Mitsubishi Corporation, Mitsubishi Fuso Truck and Bus, and Mitsubishi Motors will jointly establish a new company to run an online platform providing comprehensive EV related services



Mitsubishi Corporation, Mitsubishi Fuso Truck and Bus (hereafter: MFTBC) and Mitsubishi Motors Corporation (hereafter: Mitsubishi Motors) aim to jointly establish a new company “EVNION Inc.” (hereafter: EVNION) in June 2024, to operate an online platform to provide one-stop services relating to electric vehicles (EV). Such establishment of EVNION will be subject to receipt of regulatory clearances from the relevant authorities.

The three companies decided to establish EVNION with the aim of easily providing relevant information and services to more users, as EVs gain increasing attention from vehicle buyers who are considering their contribution towards a decarbonized society.

EVNION will operate a unique online platform “EVNION PLACE” (hereafter: “the platform”) that offers comprehensive EV-related services to customers in Japan, regardless of brand and whether it is a commercial vehicle or a passenger car. The platform is planned to be launched in August 2024.

The platform’s “Marketplace” services range from charging equipment for EVs, power supply contracts and energy management, to charging solutions for supporting introduction and operation of EVs and consulting services for decarbonization. Additionally, the platform will also provide EV-related news and useful information when introducing and operating EVs. Customers transitioning from conventional vehicles to EVs face various changes and have many questions, and this platform, with its integration of all necessary information and services, will certainly assist them in their journey. After the launch, the platform will gradually expand the content to commit to Japan’s target to realize carbon neutrality by 2050, and DX (digital transformation). ■

## Karsan to Carry Passengers to Rotterdam Airport with Autonomous E-ATAK

**K**arsan, which plays a pioneering role in transforming public transport to the electric and autonomous in the global market, especially in Europe, continues to break new ground in the sector. The company has now inked a contract with RET (Rotterdamse Elektrische Tram), the primary public transport operator in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and DAM Shuttles to provide public transport services at Rotterdam Airport with the driverless model Karsan Autonomous e-ATAK developed in cooperation with ADASTEC, which has offered service globally since 2021. Two units of Karsan Autonomous e-ATAK buses, which will carry passengers and employees on a 5-kilometer route between Meijersplein metro station and the Rotterdam Airport, will be added to RET’s park in November 2024.

Bringing future technologies to the present day and navigating the sector with pioneering attempts, Karsan continues to break new ground in global markets. Drawing attention with its innovations in the European electric

public transport market, Karsan also keeps moving to do what has not been done before in self-driving transport. In this regard, Karsan, which has signed an agreement to export two Autonomous e-ATAK buses to Rotterdam, the Netherlands, will also execute the world’s first airport autonomous project with its autonomous business partner ADASTEC.

Two Autonomous e-ATAK buses, the world’s first serially produced Level 4 autonomous bus developed by Karsan and its business partner ADASTEC, will be delivered to RET, Rotterdam’s public transport operator, in November. Autonomous e-ATAK, road tests of which are planned to be completed by the end of December, will start to offer service on the route in January 2025. Stating that they play a leading role in driving global public transport with the vision of being “One Step Ahead in the Future of Mobility,” Karsan CEO Okan Baş noted that the first export to the Netherlands will be realized following this signature. ■



# ADB, Energy Absolute Sign 3.9 Billion Thai Baht Deal for E-Bus Purchase, Enhancing Sustainable Transport in Thailand

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Energy Absolute signed a 3.9 billion Thai baht (about \$110 million equivalent) loan to Energy Absolute Public Company Limited (EA) for the purchase of up to 1 200 electric buses (e-buses). These e-buses will displace internal combustion engine buses in Bangkok, supporting the use of clean public transport in Thailand.

The financing package comprises 1.3 billion Thai baht loans each from ADB, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and Export-Import Bank of Thailand (EXIM Thailand), with ADB as the mandated lead arranger—mobilizing both international and domestic private sector capital. The total project cost is up to 6 billion Thai baht. ASEAN Catalytic

Green Finance Facility also provided technical assistance on the public bus electrification market study.

The e-buses will supplement the public transport services of Thai Smile Bus Company Limited and its subsidiaries in Bangkok, covering 123 routes, nearly half of the city's total public bus routes.

Manufactured in Thailand, the e-buses consist of at least 40% locally sourced materials, including EV batteries. The project will make meaningful contributions to Thailand's climate ambitions by diversifying the transportation mix in favor of e-buses and to Thailand's policy to develop the EV industry. ■

## Volkswagen e-Volksbus Electric Bus for Latin America Production Starting in 2024

Volkswagen Truck & Bus will start production of its electric bus model for Latin America in the second half of 2024. The model, called e-Volksbus, is under development at VWTB's world engineering center in Resende (Brazil), and draws on all the knowledge accumulated by the company in the five years of experience with the first 100 percent electric truck made in Brazil, the e-Delivery.

Both vehicles even have shared technologies and components to cope with the severe operating conditions in the country, the manufacturer stresses.

Still in the prototype phase, the model uses a specific modular architecture solution for building electric vehicles, and can produce anything from a nine-meter minibus to a

23-meter super-articulated vehicle. The configuration was designed by Volkswagen Truck & Bus Engineering in Brazil.

This confirmation took place at the "RJ Electromobility – New Energy Source and the Future of Road Transport by Bus in the State of Rio de Janeiro", organized by the Department of Road Transport of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Detrorj), in partnership with the State Department of Transport and Urban Mobility (Setram). The meeting takes place on March 12 and 13, from 9 am to 5 pm, at the Remo da Lagoa Stadium, in the South Zone of the City of Rio de Janeiro.

The model presented at the event has a capacity of 22 tons and a stated range of up to 250 km, with a night-time charging system to maximize productivity. ■

## Ikarus and Yutong are Jointly Bidding for Budapest's Tender for up to 160 Trolleybuses

Hungarian bus builder Ikarus and Yutong, the world's largest bus manufacturer, have formed a consortium to participate in a trolleybus tender in Hungary for solo and articulated vehicles issued by BKK (Budapesti Közlekedési Központ Zrt) in Hungary (up to 160 units).

Ikarus has already in force a cooperation with Chinese CRRC in the electric bus segment, while Yutong hasn't been present in the European trolleybus market so far (but has delivered some 130 vehicles in Mexico City – picture above).

The open negotiation procurement procedure called "Trolleybus Vehicle Acquisition IV Phase" initiated by the

Budapest Transport Center is scheduled from 2025 to 2027, and it includes the purchase of a total of 160 articulated and solo trolleybuses equipped with battery-powered off-wire propulsion capability, Ikarus states.

And adds: "The current consortium partnership allows for effective cooperation between the two bus manufacturers in project implementation, leveraging coordinated resources for successful tendering. While Ikarus has previously manufactured trolleybuses in Hungary, compliance with the BKK tender required an international partner with the necessary trolleybus manufacturing capacity, and Yutong gladly accepted the partnership request". ■

# Sun Bus Tech Chooses Johor To Establish Its Headquarters, The First Ever Body Manufacturing & Assembly Facility

**S**un Bus Tech Sdn. Bhd. ('Sun Bus Tech'), a bus and bus body manufacturing company owned by the Sun Wah Group, has officially established its Headquarters, the first bus body manufacturing and assembly facility during a grand groundbreaking ceremony held at Senai Airport City, Johor today. The project is aimed to provide high technology, quality economical services and products in the public transportation industry in stepping up its efforts to realise sustainable and fuel-efficient vehicles.

In welcoming Sun Bus Tech to be part of Malaysia's development in the

automotive industry, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA), Datuk Wira Arham Abdul Rahman said "The investment by Sun Bus Tech is the kind of investment that Malaysia aims to attract and anchor. This investment project will create job opportunities for more than 200 jobs ranging from manufacturing front liners to managerial positions."

The manufacturing of Sun Bus Tech will involve a total of up to four production lines which is estimated to produce more than 300 units of commercial vehicles a year. In line with the company's vision of building

sustainable and environmentally friendly products, Sun Bus Tech will be setting up automation feature in both its production and warehouse. The office and factory buildings will be installing solar panels, solar reflective glass to reduce energy consumption and adopting rainwater recycling in efforts to protect the environment.

"Our vision is simple. We want to deliver economical, reliable, and progressive solutions to the demand of sustainable public transport. We play our part to contribute to a better living environment" added Mr. Phang Sun Wah. 🇲🇾

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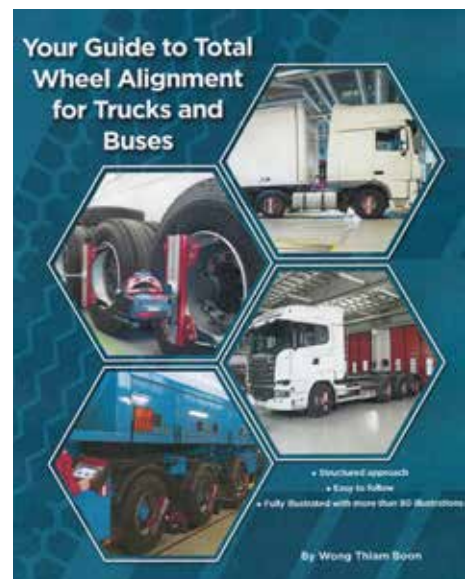
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