

Conventional truck ready to make a true name for itself

Minsk's Automobile Works — one of Belarus' largest machine building giants — recently presented an absolutely new model of tractor truck, with a 1.5m bonnet protecting its 600HP EURO-4 engine

By Dmitry Pirosmenov

The 6440 model is the second attempt by MAZ to create a conventional truck. The first occurred in 1947; the prototype has taken 64 years to realise! The designers have worked quickly to develop the new model within just eight months,

combining the best achievements of contemporary machine building in its design, level of comfort, security, ecological standards and technical-operational parameters.

Nikolay Lakotko, MAZ's Deputy Chief Designer, gave me a mini-presentation on what makes the MAZ-6440 different from its predecessors and how it's likely to attract custom. Primarily, it differs in shape; although the designers say the bonnet is primarily functional, it directly influences comfort. Meanwhile, the engine is placed in front of the cabin, rather than underneath, allowing the vehicle to have a low and flat floor. Drivers won't have to climb another step and will be less disturbed by noise and vibration.

Security is also essential, with the bonnet serving as an additional protective barrier in case of road traffic accidents. It can prevent significant

damage to the cabin and serious injury to drivers.

The new vehicle has been designed to cover long distances, so each detail

It's a Belarusian achievement, with 80 percent of its components produced domestically. Only the automatic transmission

rector General, believes that domestically-produced engines should be used universally across its range; it's his top priority. At present, the Belarusian automobile giant imports engines from Yaroslavl's Motor Works and other manufacturers.

Of course, much testing lies ahead; the first prototype will go to the Belarusian State Circus,

size of trucks. In Europe, the maximum length is 16.5m; in Russia, this figure is 20m. Our model is 18.45m long with an attached semitrailer. However, we'll continue working to expand our range. Scania, Volvo and Mercedes also have similar models. We think that we've produced a vehicle of almost the same level and have even outstripped our rivals regarding value for money. It's too early to speak about the definite cost of the model though."

It's a policy of reasonable conservatism. The MAZ-6440 offers value for money, while being easy to drive and meeting all international requirements. If a customer needs a vehicle to be tailored with the latest technical innovations, their order can be satisfied.

The enterprise has produced a new range of tractor trucks, buses and mini-buses, testifying to MAZ's success by bringing a positive balance of \$130m this year. New markets are being mastered, including those in Africa and Latin America. It's no surprise that foreigners take an interest in the company. Negotiations with Russian KAMAZ have been underway for several months regarding a joint holding. Mr. Borovsky tells us, "At present, according to schedule, the factory's assets are being assessed. We've also received an interesting proposal from the GAZ Group. If we create a holding with the latter, we'll have both engines and transmissions. However, we'll see who offers the better terms. In fact, we could give 48 percent of our shares to KAMAZ and 25 percent to GAZ, gaining the best of both worlds. There's no reason to reject either. The controlling stake would still be in the hands of the state."

in the cabin is functional: automatic transmission, cruise and climate control systems, a GPS navigator, stability control, and comfortable seats with heated backs and cushions. Trips certainly won't be wearisome. However, if a driver does become tired, he can sleep in the cabin; there are two beds located behind the seats, across two levels, enabling even the tallest drivers to fully lie down.

and improved system ensuring enhanced traffic security are imported. The 600HP engine, which was assembled at Minsk Motor Works within just a few months, is powerful enough to allow it to pull up to 120 tonnes. Even BelAZ's quarry machinery and Gomselmash's forage harvesters boast only 425-450HP engines.

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rector General, believes that domestically-produced engines should be used universally across its range; it's his top priority. At present, the Belarusian automobile giant imports engines from Yaroslavl's Motor Works and other manufacturers.

Mr. Lakotko, who designed the model, tells us about the niche he expects it to occupy on the market and whether it'll be competitive. He explains, "We've primarily oriented the design towards the Russian market and those countries which have no serious restrictions regarding the

Restructuring should benefit investments

Government studies possibility of transferring Lidagroprommash JSC's package of shares to Lidselmash

Belarus' Prime Minister, Mikhail Myasnikov, has announced that Lidagroprommash's possible joining to another machine building company — Lidselmash — is currently being debated. Its shares are overseen by the Industry Ministry at the moment but a change to the company's management, employing modern methods, would strengthen this

successful enterprise, while solving some production issues.

In 1994, Lidselmash was restructured as an open joint stock company, producing over 50 agricultural vehicles. Mr. Myasnikov believes that a move towards manufacturing industrial greenhouses would be wise. Talks are now underway with foreign investors regarding the organisation of a joint export-oriented facility in Lida. Lidselmash has already been visited by technical specialists from Israeli MERHAV



Radiator production at Lidselmash

— a company interested in investment into the project. Lida specialists are soon

to visit sites in Polish Olsztyn which have been constructed by the Israeli firm.

Reasonable desire to become an entrepreneur

By Anton Denisenkov

Quarter of Belarus' population ready to set up their own small business

According to the results of a recent sociological survey, over 70 percent of Belarusians have a positive attitude towards private entrepreneurship, with over 25 percent keen on having their own business. Around 32 percent prefer to work at a state enterprise, institution or organisation while over 70 percent believe that the current business climate in Belarus promotes the development of entrepreneurship.

Many Belarusian residents are ready to open their own business or be

employed by a private firm, with almost 24 percent admitting that private entrepreneurship attracts them with its high salaries. Many believe that the private sector offers opportunities to continue training while bringing benefit to society.

According to the National Statistical Committee of Belarus, almost a quarter of Belarusian workers are employed by small and medium-sized enterprises, producing around 20 percent of the GDP. Over the last four years, the number of small and medium-sized businesses has increased about 1.5-fold — from 56,000 to 87,000. Moreover, almost 250,000 individual entrepreneurs have been registered in the country.