

Radialisation of Tyres for Trucks, Buses Shifts to Higher Gear

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Radialisation of tyres for heavy vehicles is gaining momentum in India, taking a cue from the West, with major tyre makers like Apollo, JK, CEAT and MRF ramping up capacities as customers demand better mileage and durability.

Almost all Indian cars run on radial tyres. Radial tyres had a 17% share of the heavy vehicles market in 2011-12 and this year the target is 24%, a level beyond which companies expect the trend to snowball.

In the US, China and Europe, up to 90% of trucks run on radial tyres.

In 2011-12, there was just 3% increase in radialisation in the truck and bus (T&B) segment. The tyre industry expects a 7% rise in the current year.

Tyre companies are increasing capacities to cash in on the trend.

JK Tyres, a pioneer in the field, has plants in Mysore and Chennai with a capacity to make 1.3 million tyres, which will be raised to 1.5 million.

"We are ahead of the industry as of our total T&B tyre production of 4 million per annum, around 33-35% are radials," said Swaranjit Singh, materials di-

Better Road Grip

17% Share of radial tyres in heavy vehicles market (2011-12)

24% Target for 2012-13

What are tyre makers doing

JK Tyres to raise capacity to 1.5 m tyres at its plants in Mysore and Chennai

Apollo Tyres targets 6,000 radial T&B tyres daily at its Chennai plant by third quarter

Why radials?

Better mileage, durability and increased awareness among customers has tilted scales in favour of radials.

rector of JK Tyres.

Apollo Tyres, another major player, expects to raise daily capacity at its Chennai plant to 6,000 radial T&B tyres by the third quarter from 4,000 now, said a company spokesman. Apollo Tyres has achieved 25% radialisation in the segment, above the industry average.

The obvious advantages of bet-

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90% of trucks use radial tyres in the US, China and Europe



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RAJIV BUDHRAJA

Director General,
Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association

ed to retreading than Chinese tyres," Swaranjit Singh said, a factor which can offset the threat from Chinese tyres.

Once radialisation reaches 25% level, it can progress fast, as seen in developed countries. "The quality has to be superior to achieve a higher growth rate. The quality requirement is higher than that of a passenger car. This is one of the reasons the tyre industry is going for imported rubber," said Rajiv Budhraja, director general of Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association.

He feels the quality of domestic rubber has to improve for better offtake. The recent campaign for quality improvement of sheet rubber held by the Rubber Board in Kottayam, where industry stakeholders met, could help.

ter mileage and durability and increased awareness seem to have tilted customer choice in favour of radials. Till 2011-12, the growth in radialisation in the T&B segment was about 2%. The advent of Chinese radials at cheaper rates, too, helped build awareness, though they were inferior to Indian radials.

"Indian radials are better suit-