THE BUS INSIDER

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Safety Beyond The Bus

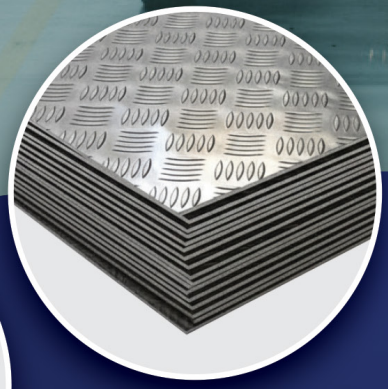
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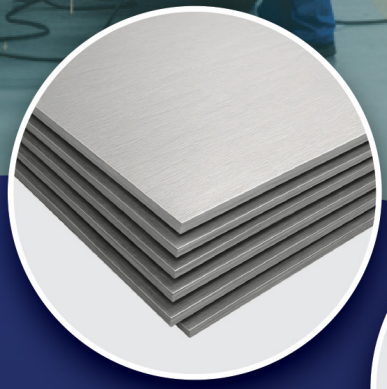
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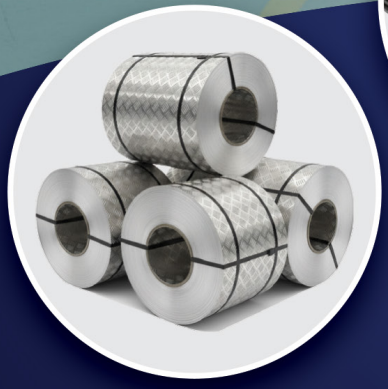
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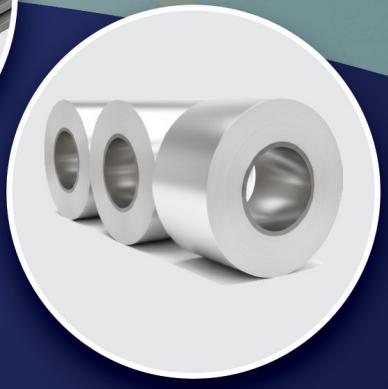
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Hello everyone,

For three days, an industry that is otherwise spread across cities, companies and competing interests comes together under one roof. Prawaas 5.0 was no different. There were new products, new ideas, familiar faces and plenty of conversations about where passenger mobility is headed.

It was wonderful meeting so many of you there.

More than the launches, what stayed with me was the sense of community. Prawaas is slowly beginning to feel like a festival for our industry - a time when everyone comes together, catches up, exchanges ideas and reminds themselves that we are all part of something much bigger.

We need more moments like this. Because when an industry comes together, the conversation moves forward.

Our cover story this month takes us to another important milestone.

Sutlej Motors completes 50 years under the Sutlej brand. Its journey is not simply about longevity. It is about reinvention — from craftsmanship to engineering-led coach building, and from traditional manufacturing to a future shaped by safety, technology and changing passenger expectations.

We also take a closer look at one of the industry's biggest conversations - why are intercity electric buses yet to go mainstream? The answer goes well beyond the vehicle itself. Charging infrastructure, financing, operational flexibility and asset value all have a role to play.

Technology takes centre stage too, with AirFi showing how AI and connected technology can move beyond passenger experience to improve driver safety, fleet visibility and operational intelligence.

And then, there is some personal news.

After a long wait, we have finally received the Government of India's approval for the name The Bus Insider. This is the name we started with. The name we believed in. And finally, we can carry it forward officially. It is a small line on paper, perhaps. But for us, it feels like the completion of a chapter.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

Here's to the people, the conversations, and everything that lies ahead.

Cheers!



Shivam Gautom

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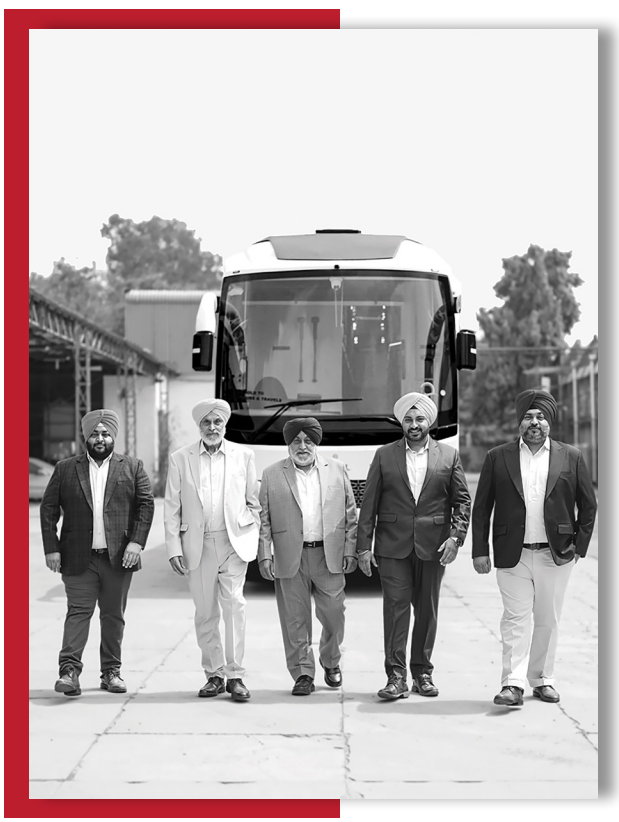
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EKA MOBILITY Begins Electric Bus Operations in Zanzibar

EKA Mobility has expanded its global footprint with the launch of its first electric bus fleet in Zanzibar, Tanzania.

The inaugural fleet of 15 fully electric 12-metre buses was inaugurated by Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar, and is scheduled to enter commercial service from August 1, 2026.

The deployment marks Zanzibar's first electric public bus fleet and represents a significant step in the island's transition towards sustainable public transport.

The initial fleet is part of a larger order for 35 buses, with plans to scale operations to 150 EKA electric buses by the end of the year.

Beyond reducing emissions, the programme is expected to create local employment opportunities while supporting the development of technical skills for electric bus operations and maintenance.

Speaking on the occasion, Vijay Yelne, President – Export Marketing & SCM, EKA Mobility, said the project demonstrates the company's capability to deliver Indian-developed electric mobility solutions to international markets. He described Africa as a key region in EKA Mobility's global growth strategy.

The project is being implemented in partnership with Global Rapid Transport (GRT), which will work with EKA Mobility to train local personnel in vehicle operations, maintenance, software systems and safety. The initiative aims to establish a sustainable electric mobility ecosystem for Zanzibar's public transport network.

Built on EKA Mobility's next-generation electric platform, the 12-metre buses are designed to offer zero tailpipe emissions, high energy efficiency and improved passenger comfort for urban operations.

The Zanzibar deployment reflects the growing global ambitions of Indian electric bus manufacturers.

As international markets increasingly seek reliable zero-emission transport solutions, export projects such as this showcase India's ability to supply not only electric buses but also the technology, training and operational support required to build sustainable public transport ecosystems.

BlackBuck EV And Chalo Join Hands to Deploy Up to 300 Premium Electric Buses



BlackBuck EV and transport technology company Chalo have partnered to accelerate the deployment of premium electric buses across India, signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the proposed rollout of up to 300 electric buses on urban and intercity routes.

The collaboration brings together BlackBuck EV's electric bus manufacturing capabilities with Chalo's digital mobility platform to deliver an integrated passenger transport solution that combines zero-emission mobility with connected fleet operations.

Under the partnership, BlackBuck EV will manufacture, supply and maintain premium electric buses in 9-metre, 13.5-metre and 15-metre configurations, while Chalo will deploy and operate the fleet using its technology platform for ticketing, passenger information, live bus tracking, fleet management and route operations.

The deployment will include BlackBuck EV's current electric bus portfolio comprising the VIRO 2X for city operations, the ELON 2X premium intercity coach and the ELON 3X multi-axle electric bus designed for long-distance travel. Built on the company's proprietary skateboard chassis with an aluminium-composite spaceframe, the buses are equipped with connected diagnostics, telematics and premium passenger amenities.

Commenting on the partnership, Ramakrishnam Raju, CEO and Founder of BlackBuck EV, said the collaboration combines the company's purpose-built electric bus platform with Chalo's digital mobility expertise to create a scalable model for premium passenger transport.

Mohit Dubey, CEO and Co-founder of Chalo, said the partnership aims to make public transport cleaner, smarter and more accessible by leveraging the complementary strengths of both organisations.

Beyond vehicle deployment, the collaboration will utilise operational and vehicle data to enhance preventive maintenance, improve fleet availability, optimise route planning and deliver a more predictable passenger experience through features such as live tracking, digital ticketing and real-time travel information.

The partnership reflects a broader shift in India's electric bus industry, where OEMs are increasingly collaborating with mobility technology providers to deliver end-to-end transport solutions rather than standalone vehicles. As public transport operators place greater emphasis on digital integration, connected services and passenger experience, such partnerships are expected to play a growing role in shaping the next phase of electric mobility adoption across the country.



Keto Motors Enters Electric Bus Market with Urbanova KE9

Keto Motors has made its entry into India's electric bus segment with the launch of the Urbanova KE9, a 9-metre electric bus developed for urban and institutional transportation.

Alongside the launch, the company signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) that could pave the way for the deployment of up to 250 electric buses, marking its first major step into the country's rapidly expanding electric commercial vehicle market.

The Urbanova KE9 was unveiled during a launch event where Keto Motors also handed over its first commercial electric bus to an operating partner, signalling the beginning of its commercial journey in the passenger mobility sector.

Designed for city and institutional applications, the Urbanova KE9 accommodates up to 31 passengers and has been engineered with a focus on operational efficiency, passenger comfort and safety.

According to the company, the bus offers a certified operating range of over 150 km under fully loaded conditions and features a 900 mm floor height to facilitate easy boarding.

The vehicle is equipped with electro-hydraulic power steering, Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), regenerative braking and disc brakes to enhance safety and drivability. The launch also aligns with Keto Motors' broader strategy of building an integrated commercial electric mobility ecosystem.

Venkatesh Challa, Director, Keto Motors, said the company's vision extends beyond manufacturing electric vehicles to integrating advanced engineering, connected technologies, charging infrastructure and digital fleet management into a unified platform.

Supporting this expansion is Keto Motors' planned investment of ₹300 crore in Telangana. Announced through an MoU with the state government in December 2025, the investment will expand the company's existing manufacturing facility at Jadcherla while establishing a new greenfield facility within the Telangana EV Mobility Valley.

Speaking at the launch, Union Minister of Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy described the Urbanova KE9 as a reflection of India's growing capabilities in indigenous electric vehicle manufacturing and its commitment to sustainable public transport. Keto Motors' entry adds another domestic player to India's fast-growing electric bus ecosystem. As demand continues to rise across public transport, employee transportation and institutional mobility, new manufacturers are expanding the range of locally developed electric bus platforms, strengthening domestic manufacturing capabilities and intensifying competition in one of the commercial vehicle industry's fastest-evolving segments.

SWITCH Mobility Bags Order for 650 Electric Buses Under PM E-Drive Scheme



SWITCH Mobility has secured an order for 650 electric buses under the Government of India's PM E-Drive Scheme, further strengthening its position in the country's growing electric bus market.

The buses will be deployed across Mumbai and Pune, supporting the expansion of zero-emission public transport in two of Maharashtra's largest urban centres. The order comprises 9-metre SWITCH EiV9 low-floor electric buses in both air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned configurations. The buses will be supplied under the CESL PM E-Drive Phase II tender, with Sai Green Projects Pvt. Ltd. serving as the selected operator.

The deployment will support the fleets of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST) undertaking in Mumbai and the Pune Mahanagar Parivahan Mahamandal Ltd. (PMPML), contributing to the government's objective of accelerating electric mobility through the PM E-Drive initiative. Commenting on the development, Mahesh Babu, CEO of SWITCH Mobility, said the order reinforces the company's commitment to supporting India's transition towards sustainable public transport while delivering cleaner, quieter and more efficient mobility solutions for commuters. The contract adds to SWITCH Mobility's expanding portfolio of electric bus deployments across the country.

The company has steadily strengthened its presence in the public transport segment through supplies to state transport undertakings and city bus operators, while continuing to broaden its product portfolio with platforms such as the recently launched EiV9, developed for urban and institutional transport applications.

The 650-bus order also highlights the growing impact of the PM E-Drive Scheme on India's electric bus market. By enabling large-scale procurement through centralised tenders, the programme is creating sustained opportunities for domestic manufacturers while helping cities accelerate fleet electrification. As urban transport authorities increasingly transition to zero-emission mobility, contracts of this scale are expected to drive manufacturing volumes, strengthen localisation and support the wider adoption of electric buses across the country.





Olectra Greentech Crosses 4,000 Electric Buses on Indian Roads

Olectra Greentech has become the first electric bus manufacturer in India to deploy 4,000 electric buses on the country's roads, achieving a significant milestone in the nation's electric mobility journey.

The milestone coincided with the induction of 297 electric buses into the fleet of the Himachal Road Transport Corporation (HRTC), where Olectra's 4,000th electric bus was ceremonially handed over.

The event was attended by Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, Deputy Chief Minister Mukesh Agnihotri, senior government officials, HRTC representatives and Olectra executives.

With electric buses operating across multiple states and cities, Olectra has established one of the country's largest electric bus fleets. According to the company, its buses have collectively travelled over 730 million kilometres, preventing more than 6.5 lakh tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions while transporting millions of passengers through public transport networks. Commenting on the achievement, Mahesh Babu, Managing Director, Olectra Greentech Ltd., described the deployment of 4,000 electric buses as a defining milestone for both the company and India's electric mobility sector.

He said becoming the first manufacturer to achieve this scale reflects the growing confidence that state transport undertakings have placed in electric buses and reaffirmed the company's commitment to expanding electric mobility through innovation, manufacturing capability and advanced technology.

The induction of 297 electric buses into HRTC's fleet is expected to strengthen sustainable public transport in Himachal Pradesh while supporting the state's clean mobility initiatives.

The latest milestone comes as India's electric bus market continues to gather momentum through increasing procurement by state transport undertakings and large-scale electrification programmes.

Olectra's achievement highlights the growing maturity of the domestic electric bus industry, with manufacturers steadily scaling production and deployments to meet the country's transition towards cleaner public transportation.

JSW Greentech Launches First Fleet of 100 Electric Buses



JSW Greentech has launched its first fleet of 100 electric buses, marking a significant milestone in the company's entry into India's commercial electric mobility sector. The inaugural fleet was rolled out at JSW Steel's Dolvi plant in Maharashtra, where the buses are expected to support employee transportation and other mobility requirements.

Announcing the development on X, Sajjan Jindal, Chairman of JSW Group, described the launch as an important step in advancing India's green mobility ambitions. He also congratulated the JSW Greentech team, led by Sumit Mittal, for developing a "Made in India" electric bus designed to support the country's transition towards cleaner transportation.

Established in 2024, JSW Greentech is the JSW Group's dedicated commercial electric mobility company, focused on developing electric commercial vehicles by leveraging the group's manufacturing capabilities and industrial ecosystem.

The company is currently setting up a 90-acre greenfield manufacturing facility at Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Maharashtra. Once operational, the plant will have an annual production capacity of 10,000 electric buses and 5,000 electric trucks, significantly expanding the group's manufacturing footprint in the commercial EV segment.

According to the company, its electric vehicle platform has been engineered in-house at its Pune research and development centre, while also drawing on select global partnerships and a strong localisation strategy to support domestic manufacturing.

The launch of the first 100 buses represents the initial phase of JSW Greentech's commercial electric mobility plans. The deployment at the Dolvi facility is expected to serve as a foundation for the wider adoption of electric buses across the JSW Group's industrial operations as the company continues to expand its presence in India's rapidly evolving electric commercial vehicle market.

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Forging a Legacy: Five Decades of Innovation at Sutlej Motors

There are few names in India's bus and coach industry whose journey mirrors the evolution of the country's passenger mobility landscape as closely as Sutlej Motors. What began in 1935 as a modest carpentry workshop crafting wooden bullock carts has transformed into one of India's most respected coach builders, delivering over 50,000 buses across multiple applications.

By Violina Pegu



As the company celebrates 50 years under the Sutlej brand, its story is not merely one of longevity - it is one of continuous reinvention.

Over the decades, India's bus industry has evolved from handcrafted body fabrication to engineering-led manufacturing driven by safety regulations, passenger expectations and technological innovation.

Throughout these transitions, Sutlej has consistently adapted, embracing new materials, manufacturing techniques and design philosophies while remaining rooted in the craftsmanship that laid its foundation.

Today, the company stands at another important milestone, preparing for the next chapter of Indian passenger mobility.

From Craftsmanship to Coach Building

Sutlej's formal entry into bus and coach manufacturing in 1974 laid the foundation for what would become one of India's most recognized premium coach-building brands.

Its journey reflects an organization that has consistently anticipated change rather than reacted to it.

From manufacturing buses for Swaraj Mazda during the 1980s and 1990s to introducing one of India's earliest monocoque luxury coaches, Sutlej continually challenged conventional design practices. The launch of its rear-engine integral coach Lexia in 1993 earned recognition at Auto Expo, signalling the company's growing engineering capabilities.

Innovation continued through the following decade. Sutlej introduced low-floor city buses, developed specialised airport tarmac coaches, expanded into sleeper coach manufacturing, and showcased an indigenous double-decker luxury coach that highlighted its design ambition.

One of the defining chapters in the company's journey came through its joint venture with Mercedes-Benz and Daimler AG between 2006 and 2018.

Manufacturing premium coaches for one of the world's most respected automotive brands elevated Sutlej's manufacturing processes, quality systems and engineering standards.

Today, the company's portfolio extends well beyond luxury coaches.

Sutlej manufactures premium intercity coaches, sleeper buses, airport and tarmac coaches, school and staff buses, special-purpose vehicles and integral coaches, while delivering customised body solutions on leading chassis platforms from Volvo Eicher, BharatBenz, Ashok Leyland and Tata across 12-metre, 13.5-metre and 15-metre configurations.













Sutlej's diversification journey has also expanded into adjacent mobility sectors. In 2017, the company established Sutlej Automotive, which manufactures electric golf carts that have become a preferred mobility solution for several leading five-star resorts across India.

More recently, in 2025, Sutlej entered the defence mobility space through Sutlej Sentrix, developing specialised mobility platforms for the Indian Armed Forces.

Its Drone Shakti vehicle, showcased during the 77th Republic Day Parade in 2026, marked a proud milestone for the company and earned recognition from Lieutenant General Rajiv Sahni, Director General of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers of the Indian Army. These milestones reflect an organisation that has continuously broadened its capabilities while remaining committed to engineering excellence.

Engineering the Evolution of Indian Coach Building

Few industries have changed as dramatically over the last two decades as bus body manufacturing. Regulatory frameworks such as AIS-052, AIS-119 and, more recently, AIS-153 have fundamentally changed the way buses are designed, manufactured and certified. For manufacturers, compliance has become an opportunity to strengthen structural integrity, improve passenger safety and deliver greater long-term reliability.

Sutlej views this transformation as a natural progression of the industry. The company has steadily transitioned towards galvanised high-strength steel structures, corrosion-resistant manufacturing processes, enhanced thermal and acoustic insulation, improved structural engineering and modern production methodologies.

At the same time, it has retained its ability to customise products according to operator requirements without compromising quality or durability.

This balance between engineering discipline and manufacturing flexibility has enabled Sutlej to remain relevant across a wide spectrum of applications, from luxury coaches and sleeper buses to airport transport, institutional mobility and specialised vehicles.

Redefining the Passenger Experience

The modern passenger expects greater comfort, convenience and an elevated travel experience

expectations that are increasingly shaping operators' purchasing decisions, particularly in the premium intercity segment.

Recognising this shift, Sutlej has gradually repositioned coach design around the passenger rather than the vehicle.

Today's coaches incorporate ergonomic seating and sleeper layouts, refined lighting, improved climate control, reduced cabin noise, intelligent storage solutions, charging facilities and thoughtfully designed interiors that elevate the travel experience.

Memory-foam backrests, vanity mirrors and carefully planned passenger spaces demonstrate the company's growing emphasis on combining luxury with practicality.

However, the company believes passenger-centric design cannot come at the expense of operator economics.

Every design decision must simultaneously improve fleet utilisation, simplify maintenance and enhance long-term reliability.

Features such as larger luggage compartments, improved driver visibility through 360-degree camera systems and flexible interior configurations reflect this philosophy of delivering value to both passengers and operators.

For Sutlej, aesthetics is most effective when combined with functionality, durability and passenger comfort.

Raising the Bar Through Safety and Compliance

The introduction of AIS-153 marks one of the most significant shifts in Indian bus body manufacturing in recent years.

For Sutlej, the regulation signals a broader transformation in the role of coach builders.

The industry's future, according to the company, will be shaped by manufacturers capable of combining structural engineering, fire safety, passenger protection, accessibility and documented quality systems within an integrated product-development process.

Sutlej has responded by strengthening its focus on corrosion-resistant structures, fire-retardant materials, safer interior layouts, enhanced visibility systems and engineering-led manufacturing.

Across its latest generation of products, engineering decisions are increasingly influenced by compliance, lifecycle durability and passenger safety rather than aesthetics alone.



At the same time, the company believes consistent implementation of AIS-153 across all states will be equally important. Uniform interpretation by registration authorities would create a level playing field for manufacturers while ensuring every bus entering service meets the same benchmark for safety and quality.

A Milestone That Looks Forward

Sutlej chose to mark its 50th year by looking ahead. At the recent Prawaas 5.0, the company unveiled the S2000 Prime – 50th Anniversary Special Edition, alongside its latest-generation S1800+ Elite, reinforcing its commitment to premium coach travel.

These models represent the next phase of Sutlej's evolution, bringing together five decades of engineering expertise with contemporary styling, enhanced passenger comfort and operator-focused innovation.

The S2000 Prime integrates spacious luggage capacity, refined interiors, memory-foam backrests, vanity mirrors, intelligent passenger amenities

> *"The future of coach building belongs to manufacturers who engineer for tomorrow while learning from yesterday."*
>
> — **Herkamal Wilkhu**
> Director, **Sutlej Motors**





and advanced safety technologies, including a 360-degree camera system, creating a coach shaped by real-world operating requirements.

The response at the exhibition reinforced the company's confidence in this approach.

According to Sutlej, operators increasingly view advanced safety technologies, including fire detection and suppression systems, emergency safety features and enhanced driver visibility - not as premium additions but as essential components of future-ready coaches.

Preparing for the Next Generation of Mobility

As India's mobility ecosystem evolves, Sutlej sees opportunity across multiple fronts. Electric mobility represents one such area.

While the company believes long-distance electric coaches will depend on further advancements in battery technology and charging infrastructure, it views shorter-range urban applications as a practical starting point.

Plans to enter the electric bus OEM space through strategic technology partnerships reflect a measured approach focused on building sustainable capabilities rather than pursuing rapid expansion.

Future product development includes 15-metre buses in both front-engine and rear-engine configurations, addressing growing demand for higher passenger capacity across intercity and institutional transport segments.

International markets also represent a significant opportunity. Supported by India's competitive manufacturing ecosystem, engineering expertise and skilled workforce, Sutlej believes Indian coach builders are well positioned to strengthen their presence globally.

Having pioneered several industry firsts, from rear-engine luxury coaches and monocoque structures to specialised airport mobility solutions, the company intends to remain at the forefront of innovation while reinforcing India's reputation as a trusted manufacturing destination.



> *"The opportunity today is to move beyond building buses to engineering complete mobility experiences."*
>
> — **Harsimrat Wilkhu**
> Director, **Sutlej Motors**



Charting the Next Course

Sutlej Motors believes that longevity has never been about preserving tradition for its own sake. It has been about continuously adapting, whether through engineering innovation, manufacturing excellence, evolving passenger expectations or changing regulatory frameworks. This approach will remain grounded in an understanding of what operators need on the road and what passengers expect from every journey.

By bringing together proven manufacturing capabilities, stronger engineering systems and a willingness to embrace new technologies, Sutlej is positioned to evolve with the market while staying focused on what matters most. As the Indian bus industry enters an era defined by intelligent engineering, stricter safety standards and customer-centric mobility, the company's next chapter will likely be shaped by the same philosophy that has guided its journey since 1974: combining craftsmanship with innovation to build coaches that stand the test of time.





Why Intercity Electric Buses Are Yet To Go Mainstream

By Shivam Gautom



P.C. : Shantanu Autoclickz

Over the last few years, electric buses have been showcased as the inevitable future of public mobility in India.

Government summits, climate forums, investor presentations and OEM launches all projected the same narrative - that diesel buses would soon become relics of the past.

In many ways, this optimism wasn't misplaced. Electric buses have demonstrated meaningful success in urban public transport.

Fixed routes, predictable daily mileage, overnight depot charging, municipal ownership, and government-backed operating contracts make city operations almost tailor-made for electrification.

The problem began when the industry assumed that the same playbook would work for intercity travel. It didn't. Today, despite policy support, generous subsidies and substantial climate funding, intercity electric buses remain a niche rather than the industry standard. While a handful of large operators have successfully demonstrated long-distance electric bus operations, the economics remain far less convincing for the broader operator community.

Viewed through the lens of a typical mid-sized operator, the equation still raises difficult questions around vehicle acquisition costs, charging infrastructure, financing, operational flexibility and long-term asset value.

Even some of the biggest proponents of electric mobility have quietly diversified back into conventional diesel operations - a telling acknowledgment that the economics of long-distance mobility remain stubbornly different. The question, therefore, is not whether intercity electric buses can work. The question is why they have yet to become mainstream.



Two Markets That Were Mistakenly Considered One

The first mistake was conceptual.

India did not have one bus industry waiting to be electrified - it had two fundamentally different businesses. Urban buses operate on:

- fixed routes
- fixed schedules
- predictable mileage
- depot-based charging
- relatively low luggage requirements
- lower cruising speeds
- government contracts

Intercity buses operate under an entirely different operating philosophy. They require:

- 400–700 km daily operations
- overnight journeys
- sleeper configurations
- large luggage compartments
- higher cruising speeds
- strict adherence to arrival timings
- minimal downtime
- private ownership and commercial viability

The industry attempted to transplant the urban EV model into this ecosystem. That assumption underestimated just how different intercity mobility really is.

Building Buses Before Building The Ecosystem

When automobiles began becoming mainstream in India, the country did not simply encourage people to buy vehicles and hope the ecosystem would emerge.

It built the ecosystem first.

Fuel stations gradually expanded across highways, towns and cities, allowing vehicle ownership to grow without drivers worrying about where the next tank of fuel would come from.


P.C. : Engina Kyurt

Electric mobility followed the reverse sequence.

The policy focus remained largely on subsidies, incentives and adoption targets, while the charging ecosystem, particularly along highways, lagged behind.

Without infrastructure, demand remained limited. Without demand, private investment remained cautious. And without private investment, infrastructure continued to lag.

The scale of the challenge was highlighted during the Busworld India Conclave 2026 by **Prasanna Patwardhan**, Chairman and Managing Director of Purple Mobility.

According to Patwardhan, electric buses require one to four hours at dedicated chargers, making depot infrastructure critical to operations.

Yet, out of India's estimated 20 lakh buses, only around 1.5 lakh belong to operators with organised depot infrastructure.

The remaining operators often lack the land, electrical capacity and charging facilities required for large-scale electrification.

Even where land is available, power infrastructure presents another hurdle. Patwardhan cited cases where extending a power connection alone cost nearly ₹1 crore - more than the charging equipment itself.

Moreover, distribution companies often require operators to bear the cost of grid upgrades while also paying usage charges.

Without dedicated charging depots of their own, the transition becomes even more difficult. Charge Point Operators introduce a layer of operational uncertainty that simply does not exist in diesel operations.

An operator must now ask several questions before dispatching a bus:

- Will the charger be operational?
- Will other buses already be waiting?
- How long will charging actually take?
- Is sufficient electrical load available?
- And what happens if the charger fails altogether?

Each additional variable directly affects schedule reliability. In the intercity bus business, reliability is not merely an operational metric - it is the product being sold.

The problem extends to highways as well. Several charging stations established along intercity corridors lacked sufficient grid capacity to support high-powered chargers.

In some cases, diesel generators were used to generate electricity that ultimately charged electric buses.



The irony was difficult to ignore. A zero-emission bus powered by a diesel generator became symbolic of an industry attempting to accelerate vehicle adoption before fully building the ecosystem needed to support it.

The Economics Never Became Convincing

Perhaps the greatest barrier wasn't technology. It was finance. The typical Indian intercity bus operator follows a remarkably disciplined financial model.

A premium sleeper coach costing ₹70–80 lakh is largely financed through bank loans. Once the bus is operational, daily revenue covers:

- fuel
- salaries
- tolls
- maintenance
- EMIs

After three to four years, the vehicle is sold into the secondary market. That resale value often becomes the operator's largest single financial gain from the investment.

Now multiply this across a fleet of twenty buses. The business model becomes predictable. Electric buses disrupted every assumption.

For operators, the economics changed overnight. The purchase price of an electric bus could exceed twice that of a comparable diesel coach.

Although operating expenses were lower, the financing ecosystem continued to treat EVs much like conventional commercial vehicles.

Banks continued evaluating loans using conventional commercial vehicle frameworks despite entirely different cash-flow characteristics.



The financing ecosystem never evolved to reflect an asset with high upfront cost but lower operating expense.

As a result, many operators found themselves cash-flow constrained despite theoretically attractive lifetime economics.

Total Cost of Ownership Was Still an Equation, Not a Reality

On paper, EV proponents frequently highlighted lower Total Cost of Ownership (TCO).

Operators, however, are asking different questions.

- What is the battery worth after six years?
- How much will replacement batteries cost?
- How easy will it be to sell the bus?

No one had real answers because India had not yet completed enough full EV bus life cycles.

Until operators witness successful first-generation resale markets, TCO calculations remain largely theoretical.

Commercial transport businesses operate on evidence - not projections.

No Compelling Reason for Passengers to Switch

At the same time, consumers also failed to perceive a meaningful value proposition.

Passengers rarely choose an intercity bus because it is electric.

They choose based on:

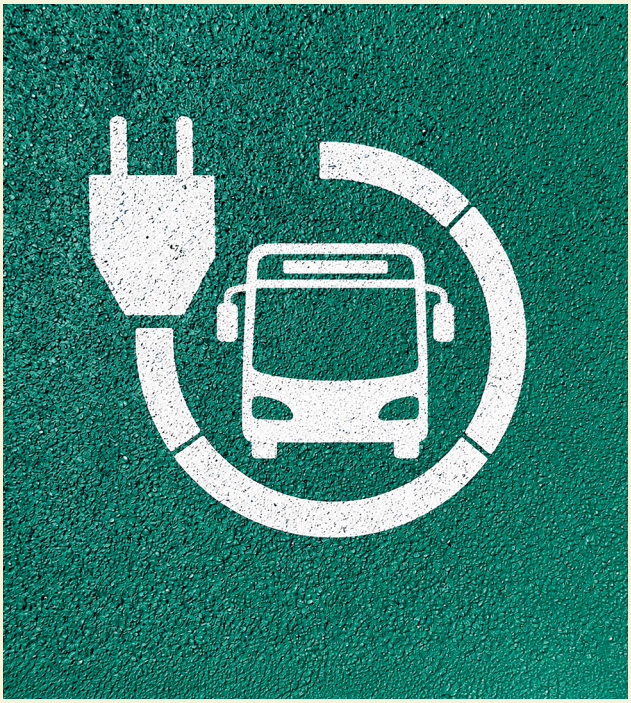
- punctuality
- comfort
- safety
- price
- operator reputation
- service quality



Environmental sustainability certainly improves brand perception. But very few passengers willingly pay higher fares, or accept operational uncertainty, for sustainability alone.

Unlike premium airlines that can monetise brand differentiation, bus travel remains intensely price sensitive.

The “green” badge, while valuable for policy narratives, did not materially alter consumer behaviour.



The Reality of Indian Operations

India is not an easy market. Highway operations involve thousands of daily variables:

- varying road conditions
- driver shortages
- permit complexities
- seasonal demand fluctuations
- unpredictable passenger behaviour

A typical SME operator already spends every day solving dozens of operational problems.

And electric buses introduce another layer of operational anxiety.

“What if my charger stops working tonight?”

That question simply never existed with diesel. For many operators, that uncertainty alone remains a significant barrier to adoption.

Sometimes, technological transitions fail not because technology is poor, but because they increase operational complexity faster than they reduce operational costs.

The Lesson

The lesson from India’s intercity electric experience is not that electric buses are a failed technology. Far from it.

They have demonstrated clear success in urban transit. The lesson is that technology cannot substitute for ecosystems. Governments can subsidise vehicles. They cannot subsidise operational certainty indefinitely.

Private operators invest in predictable cash flows, not technological optimism. Customers reward reliability more than sustainability messaging. Infrastructure must precede mass adoption - not follow it.



The Road Ahead

The future of intercity mobility may ultimately belong to a combination of technologies rather than a single winner.

Longer-range batteries, faster charging, battery swapping, improved financing models, hybrid architectures, hydrogen or other alternative fuels may all play important roles.

But the next transition should begin differently. India’s transport challenges are rarely solved from conference rooms or policy summits.

They are solved at highway dhabas, charging stations, maintenance yards, financing desks and operator offices, where every minute of downtime and every rupee of operating cost matters.

The intercity electric bus segment is not lagging because Indian operators are rejecting clean mobility.

It is lagging because the industry attempted to electrify intercity buses before fully electrifying the ecosystem around them.

Only when infrastructure, finance, technology and operations evolve together will electric intercity buses become not just environmentally desirable - but commercially inevitable.

How Zingbus Is Redefining Safe Intercity Mobility Through Technology, Operations And Service Consistency

By Violina Pegu



India's intercity bus industry is entering a new phase of growth. Premium services are expanding rapidly, passenger expectations are evolving, and operators are scaling across wider networks than ever before.

Yet, while fleets continue to grow, one challenge remains constant, delivering a safe and reliable journey every single day.

Traditionally, safety in the bus industry has been associated with vehicle specifications, maintenance schedules and driver behaviour. Those fundamentals remain essential, but they are no longer sufficient on their own.

Today's passengers evaluate safety much more broadly. The experience begins long before the wheels start turning - through accurate boarding information, dependable communication, visible journey tracking and responsive support. It extends beyond the driver's seat to every operational process that shapes the journey.

This broader approach is becoming increasingly important as organised intercity mobility expands across multiple cities, routes and operating partners.

Maintaining the same standards across hundreds of vehicles requires a system that can deliver consistency, regardless of where a passenger boards. For mobility platform zingbus, that system has become central to its growth strategy.







Scaling Without Compromising Standards

The company's plans announced at Prawaas 5.0 illustrate both the opportunity and the operational challenge ahead.

zingbus signed Memorandums of Understanding with 50 bus operators to facilitate the deployment of more than 200 zingbus Maxx and electric buses over the next 12 months, with expansion focused largely on South and West India.

The rollout will include a significant number of zingbus Maxx coaches alongside more than 50 electric buses expected to enter service during 2026, subject to vehicle availability and route readiness.

Expanding a network of this scale is about far more than adding buses. Every new vehicle, operating partner and route introduces another layer of operational complexity. Consistency therefore becomes the real differentiator.



To address this, zingbus combines its technology platform, service protocols and digital ecosystem with the regional expertise of partner operators.

The objective is to create a common operating framework where service quality and safety standards remain uniform irrespective of geography.

Engineering Safer Operations

Rather than relying solely on driver discretion, zingbus has embedded several safety measures into its operational framework.

Every zingbus-operated vehicle is electronically speed-governed to a maximum of 80 km/h, making controlled speed an operational standard across the fleet. The approach is particularly relevant for overnight services, where excessive speed combined with fatigue and reduced visibility can significantly increase operational risk.

Complementing this is the Driver Monitoring System available on zingbus Maxx buses. The technology continuously assesses driver alertness and detects early signs of fatigue or drowsiness, allowing timely intervention before a potential safety incident develops.

Together, these systems shift safety from reactive decision-making to proactive risk management.

Giving Passengers Greater Visibility

Modern passengers increasingly expect information to travel as quickly as they do. Live GPS tracking and real-time journey updates allow passengers to monitor vehicle movement, estimate arrival times and share journey progress with family members. Such visibility becomes particularly valuable during late-night departures, unfamiliar boarding locations or onward travel connections. Inside the coach, CCTV surveillance strengthens accountability, while emergency-exit visualisation presented during booking familiarises passengers with the vehicle layout before the journey even begins. Collectively, these features reduce uncertainty, an often overlooked element of passenger safety.

Technology Needs People Behind It

Digital systems can strengthen operations, but they cannot replace human support. Recognising this, zingbus has invested in trained Gold Star Crew members who serve as the primary passenger interface throughout the journey.

They are supported by a Personal Virtual Concierge and round-the-clock customer assistance capable of responding to delays, boarding changes, missed connections or other operational disruptions.

> *"India's intercity mobility sector is entering a phase where scale alone will no longer define leadership."*



Prashant Kumar
Co-Founder & CEO, Zingbus

The emphasis reflects an important reality of intercity mobility: even the most advanced technology ultimately depends on well-trained people delivering a consistent passenger experience.

Designing Safety Around the Passenger

Passenger expectations are becoming increasingly diverse, requiring operators to rethink safety from multiple perspectives.

Women, in particular, are emerging as a significant segment of organised intercity travel. According to zingbus' internal data, nearly one-third of passengers across its platform are women, while they account for around 40% of zingbus Maxx ridership. Solo bookings by women have also more than doubled over the past year.

These trends underline the growing importance of measures such as women-only seating options, live journey tracking, verified crews and easily accessible assistance.

Importantly, passenger safety extends beyond the hours spent inside the coach. Clear boarding information, dependable communication during delays and well-coordinated onward connections all contribute to building confidence, especially for those travelling alone.

When The Journey Extends Beyond The Highway

The industry's understanding of passenger safety is also expanding to include moments when the vehicle is stationary.

Premium rest stops, cleaner washrooms and scheduled meal breaks are becoming increasingly important, particularly for overnight services catering to families, senior citizens and women travellers.

On select zingbus Maxx routes, home pick-up and drop services further reduce uncertainty during the first and last mile, often the least predictable stages of an intercity journey.

Meanwhile, zingbus Plus buses equipped with onboard bio-washrooms offer greater convenience by reducing dependence on roadside facilities during long-distance travel.

Reliability Is Also a Safety Metric

Punctuality is often discussed as a measure of customer service. In reality, it also carries significant safety implications. Unexpected delays can leave passengers stranded at unfamiliar boarding points late at night, disrupt onward transport connections



or create uncertainty during transfers. For this reason, live journey updates, clearly communicated boarding information and responsive customer support have become essential operational requirements rather than premium conveniences.

zingbus reinforces this philosophy through its zingprime On-Time Guarantee, which offers eligible members a 50% refund in the event of qualifying delays - adding a measurable layer of accountability to operational performance.

Trust Built One Journey at a Time

Operational consistency ultimately reflects in passenger confidence. According to the company, zingbus Maxx has achieved a customer satisfaction score of 90.5%, while customer retention is around 60% higher than that of zingbus Plus.

Although these are internal metrics, they indicate that passengers increasingly value reliability, transparency and service consistency alongside comfort.

The same sentiment was reflected at Prawaas 5.0, where zingbus received the Bharat Prawaas Redbus People's Choice Award 2026 for Favourite Pan-India Bus Operator.

Recognition determined by passengers carries particular significance in a category where trust is built through repeated experience. For an intercity travel company, a brand promise is tested every

time a passenger boards a bus, receives an update, interacts with the crew or reaches a destination.

Awards can recognise progress, but sustained passenger confidence depends on whether these standards are delivered consistently across future routes, vehicles and operator partnerships.

Raising The Bar For Intercity Travel

As India's organised intercity bus sector expands, safety is evolving from a vehicle-centric requirement into an operational philosophy.

For operators managing larger fleets across wider geographies, maintaining consistent standards will become just as important as introducing new buses or entering new markets. Expansion will need





to be supported by stronger distribution systems, better fleet monitoring, trained personnel, defined service protocols and transparent passenger communication.

Technology, people and structured processes must work together. A monitoring system is effective only when someone responds to its alerts. Live tracking builds confidence only when the information is accurate. Service protocols matter only when they are followed consistently across every operating partner.

In that sense, the industry's next chapter may not be defined by the number of buses on the road, but by how reliably every journey is delivered, from the moment a passenger books a ticket until they reach their destination.





How AirFi Is Redefining Bus Safety Through AI and Connected Technology

By Violina Pegu



Every successful mobility company begins by solving a real-world problem. For AirFi, that problem wasn't discovered in a boardroom or research lab; it was experienced firsthand during a bus journey.

In 2016, shortly after graduating from engineering, co-founders Ganga Sathish Reddy and Ranjith Reddy were travelling from Hyderabad to Tirupati when they encountered a reality familiar to millions of Indian bus passengers.

Internet connectivity was unreliable, there was no onboard entertainment, passengers received little information about their journey, and even something as basic as identifying the correct boarding or arrival point was often confusing.

The experience sparked a simple yet powerful question: Why should bus travel lag behind when technology has transformed almost every other mode of transportation? That question laid the foundation for AirFi.



Today, the company has evolved far beyond its original vision of onboard connectivity. What began as a passenger experience solution has transformed into an AI-powered connected mobility platform, helping operators improve safety, operational efficiency, compliance and passenger engagement through a single integrated ecosystem.

Looking Beyond Passenger Wi-Fi

AirFi's first innovation focused on improving the passenger journey.

The company introduced onboard Wi-Fi, offline entertainment and an intelligent passenger announcement system that enabled travellers to stay connected while receiving multilingual journey updates throughout their trip.

However, as the founders began working closely with fleet operators, they realised passenger experience represented only one part of a much larger challenge.

Operators were simultaneously grappling with driver behaviour, fleet visibility, passenger safety, operational efficiency, regulatory compliance and customer retention.

Managing these challenges through multiple disconnected technologies created complexity rather than efficiency.

This insight fundamentally changed AirFi's direction. Instead of continuing to develop standalone products, the company chose to build an integrated mobility ecosystem where safety, passenger experience, compliance and fleet intelligence could operate on a unified platform powered by artificial intelligence, IoT and cloud technology.

One Platform. Multiple Solutions.

Today, AirFi's portfolio spans nearly every aspect of bus operation. At the heart of the platform are AI-powered Driver Monitoring Systems (DMS) and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), designed to identify fatigue, distraction, mobile phone usage, smoking, seatbelt violations and other risky driving behaviours in real time.

Rather than reacting after an incident occurs, the system provides immediate alerts to help prevent accidents before they happen. Passenger experience remains another key pillar of the platform.

AirFi's onboard Wi-Fi, offline entertainment and multilingual passenger announcement system ensure travellers remain informed and connected throughout their journey. GPS-triggered announcements provide stop information, emergency exit instructions and rest-stop updates, improving both convenience and safety. The company has also expanded into operational intelligence through AI-powered passenger counting cameras, helping operators monitor occupancy, reduce revenue leakage and improve fleet utilisation. Complementing these solutions are AI-enabled alcohol breath analysers, GPS tracking, telematics, AI dash cameras, MDVR systems, CCTV and fuel monitoring technologies, giving operators end-to-end visibility across their fleet.

Unlike many technology providers that offer individual products, AirFi has focused on ensuring every solution communicates through one connected ecosystem, allowing operators to access actionable insights from a single platform.

"The real value of AI in mobility is enabling operators to prevent risks, make smarter decisions and deliver a better journey for every passenger."

Ranjith Reddy
Co-Founder, AirFi





Safety Moves to the Centre Stage

Among AirFi's offerings, one solution has emerged as the company's fastest-growing product - the AI-powered Driver Monitoring System. As fleet operators increasingly prioritise passenger safety, the industry is shifting from reactive monitoring towards preventive safety technologies.

AirFi's DMS continuously analyses driver behaviour using artificial intelligence, identifying fatigue, distraction, yawning, mobile phone usage, smoking and seatbelt violations before these behaviours escalate into safety risks.

The growing adoption of the platform reflects a broader transformation within India's commercial vehicle industry, where technology is increasingly being used not only to improve operational efficiency but also to reduce accidents through behavioural monitoring.

Another rapidly growing solution is the AI-enabled Alcohol Breath Analyzer, which digitally verifies driver sobriety before every trip.

Together with AI Dash Cameras and CCTV systems, the technology provides fleet operators with greater accountability while strengthening passenger confidence. On the passenger side, AirFi continues to see strong demand for its onboard connectivity and intelligent announcement systems, particularly among premium bus operators seeking to differentiate themselves through a better travel experience. Meanwhile, the company's Passenger Counting Camera has found increasing acceptance among operators looking to address revenue leakage caused by unauthorised roadside boarding while improving occupancy planning and operational transparency.

Technology That Adapts to Every Operator

One of AirFi's defining strengths lies in its ability to customise its platform for different operator requirements. The company today works with intercity bus operators, school transport providers, staff transportation companies and commercial fleet operators across India. Rather than deploying identical solutions across every fleet, AirFi tailors its technology stack according to each operator's operational priorities.

For premium operators such as **Shyamoli Paribahan**, passenger experience remains the primary focus. The deployment of onboard Wi-Fi, offline entertainment and intelligent passenger announcements has helped improve customer satisfaction while strengthening brand perception and occupancy. For operators such as **Laxmi Holidays**, the emphasis has been on safety and operational visibility. Through the deployment of

Driver Monitoring Systems, GPS tracking, CCTV and Alcohol Breath Analyzer solutions, the operator has enhanced driver accountability while improving overall fleet safety.

Perhaps the strongest endorsement of AirFi's platform is the way customers adopt it. Many operators begin with a limited deployment before gradually expanding the technology across hundreds of vehicles after witnessing measurable improvements in safety, operational efficiency and passenger satisfaction.

Building the Connected Bus Ecosystem

For AirFi, the journey has evolved well beyond onboard connectivity. The company is steadily positioning itself as a technology partner for bus operators by bringing together artificial intelligence, IoT, cloud software and intelligent hardware into one connected platform. As India's bus industry accelerates its digital transformation, the demand for integrated technologies is expected to grow further. Operators are increasingly looking for solutions that not only improve passenger safety and operational efficiency but also simplify fleet management through unified data and real-time intelligence.

Rather than developing isolated products, AirFi's long-term direction remains centred on expanding its connected ecosystem - one where Driver Monitoring Systems, ADAS, telematics, passenger information, compliance and analytics work together to support smarter decision-making.

> **"The future of bus mobility lies in connected intelligence, where safety, operations and passenger experience work together as one ecosystem, not as isolated technologies."**
>
> **Ganga Sathish Reddy**
> **Co-Founder, AirFi**





The company's vision reflects a broader shift taking place across the industry. Connected mobility is no longer just about internet access or onboard entertainment. It is becoming the foundation of modern fleet operations, enabling operators to improve safety, optimise performance and deliver a better passenger experience. For AirFi, the mission remains unchanged from that bus journey in 2016: to make every journey safer, smarter and more connected.



Shree Sai Coach Builders Is Building Beyond Compliance To Shape Next Generation Coaches

By Violina Pegu

As AIS 153 reshapes India's bus body manufacturing landscape, Shree Sai Coach Builders explains why engineering excellence, safety, technology and compliance are becoming the foundation of long-term competitiveness.





The Indian bus body manufacturing industry is undergoing one of its most significant transformations in recent years.

With the implementation of AIS 153, compliance is no longer just a regulatory milestone, it has become a catalyst for engineering-led manufacturing, improved passenger safety and higher quality standards across the sector.

For bus body builders, the transition demands far more than adapting to a new rulebook. It requires stronger engineering capabilities, validated manufacturing processes, certified components and a renewed focus on delivering long-term value to operators.

At the same time, customer expectations continue to evolve, with fleet owners seeking safer, more reliable and tech-driven buses that offer better passenger comfort and lower lifecycle costs.

In this conversation with Jigar Oza, Managing Director of Shree Sai Coach Builders shares its perspective on the industry's changing landscape, the opportunities created by AIS 153 and the technologies that will shape the next generation of Indian buses.

AIS 153 has changed the way buses are designed and manufactured. What has been the biggest shift from a bus body builder's perspective?

AIS 153 has fundamentally transformed bus body manufacturing from an experience-based approach to an engineering-driven process.

Every structural member, berth, seat anchorage and safety component must now comply with defined performance and validation standards.

At Shree Sai Coach Builders, this shift has strengthened our engineering processes, documentation, quality control and testing procedures, enabling us to deliver buses that are safer, more durable and manufactured with greater consistency.

Many manufacturers view compliance as a regulatory requirement. How can AIS 153 become an opportunity to improve product quality and customer confidence?

AIS 153 should be viewed as much more than a compliance requirement. It presents an opportunity to improve product quality, strengthen passenger safety and build long-term customer confidence.

Certified vehicles provide fleet operators with greater assurance, reduce operational risks and enhance their brand reputation.

We believe compliance is a competitive advantage that differentiates manufacturers committed to delivering consistently high-quality products.

Where do bus body builders continue to face challenges in implementing the new standards, and what support does the industry need?

The transition brings several challenges, including adapting existing designs to meet new engineering requirements, sourcing certified components, managing costs and continuously training skilled manpower. Going forward, the industry will benefit from stronger collaboration between OEMs, component suppliers, testing agencies and regulatory bodies, supported by regular technical guidance that enables manufacturers to implement the standards more effectively.

Operators today expect more than just a compliant bus. What additional features or engineering improvements are becoming increasingly important?

Today's operators are looking beyond compliance. They expect buses that deliver better passenger comfort, higher reliability and lower maintenance costs throughout the vehicle's lifecycle.

Features such as improved sleeper ergonomics, efficient HVAC systems, advanced electrical architecture, CCTV, GPS, fire detection and suppression systems, lightweight yet robust structures and premium interiors are increasingly becoming standard expectations rather than optional additions.

How are customer expectations changing compared to five years ago, and how is Shree Sai Coach Builders responding?

Customers today are significantly more informed and quality-conscious than they were five years ago. Purchasing decisions are no longer driven solely by price; they now take into account safety, certification, operating efficiency, passenger comfort and long-term value.To meet these evolving expectations, we have invested in engineering capabilities, certified manufacturing processes and continuous product development to deliver higher-quality buses.





Lightweight construction, safety and passenger comfort often compete with cost. How should manufacturers strike the right balance?

The right balance comes through intelligent engineering rather than compromise. Optimised structural design, high-quality materials, validated manufacturing processes and efficient production methods make it possible to achieve weight optimisation, enhanced passenger comfort and high safety standards while maintaining competitive costs.

Technology is becoming an integral part of bus manufacturing. Which areas do you believe will see the biggest transformation over the next few years?

The industry is entering an increasingly digital era. Technologies such as digital engineering, CAD and CAE simulation, CNC manufacturing, connected vehicle solutions, predictive maintenance, advanced electrical architecture, telematics, AI-assisted quality inspection and smart safety systems will play a major role in shaping the future of bus manufacturing.

Although Shree Sai Coach Builders did not exhibit at Prawaas 5.0, what were your key takeaways from the exhibition?

Prawaas 5.0 clearly highlighted the industry's shift towards safer, smarter and more technology-driven mobility solutions.

The increasing focus on AIS standards, passenger comfort, digital integration, sustainability and premium travel experiences reinforced the direction in which India's bus industry is moving.

Such platforms provide an opportunity to showcase our engineering capabilities, AIS-certified products and manufacturing strengths while building stronger relationships with operators, OEMs and suppliers from across the country.

How important is collaboration between OEMs, suppliers and bus body builders?

Collaboration is critical to delivering world-class buses. OEMs, suppliers, certification agencies and bus body builders must work together from the design stage through production. Strong partnerships improve product quality, accelerate



innovation, strengthen supply chain efficiency and ultimately deliver greater value to customers.

What opportunities do you see for Indian bus body builders as the industry becomes more organised?

A more organised industry presents tremendous opportunities for Indian bus body builders to compete on engineering excellence, innovation, exports and premium mobility solutions.

Manufacturers that invest in certification, technology and skilled manpower will be best positioned to achieve sustainable growth while strengthening India's reputation as a global coach-building hub.

Looking ahead, what is your vision for Shree Sai Coach Builders over the next three to five years?

Our vision is to strengthen our position as one of India's leading coach builders by expanding our AIS-certified product portfolio, investing in advanced manufacturing technologies, enhancing our quality systems and delivering innovative, safe and premium buses that consistently exceed customer expectations.

We remain committed to engineering excellence, customer satisfaction and continuous innovation as we prepare for the next phase of growth.



"The future of coach building will belong to manufacturers who treat compliance as the beginning, not the destination."



Jigar Oza
Managing Director
Shree Sai Coach Builders

Synaty Automotive Turns Heads At Prawaas 5.0 With The LaVie+

The strong response to its latest premium sleeper coach highlights the growing demand for design-led, passenger-centric buses in India.

By Violina Pegu



Some products make their debut. Others make a statement. At Prawaas 5.0, Synaty Automotive's newly unveiled LaVie+ firmly belonged to the latter.

Drawing attention from operators, fleet owners and industry stakeholders throughout the exhibition, the premium sleeper coach emerged as one of the event's key attractions.

For a company that entered the sleeper coach segment only last year, the response represented more than just visitor interest.

It reinforced a philosophy that has shaped Synaty Automotive's rapid rise—building buses that combine thoughtful design, premium craftsmanship and passenger comfort without compromising safety or practicality.

The launch also comes at a time when India's premium intercity bus segment is undergoing a noticeable shift.

Operators are increasingly looking beyond conventional bus bodies, seeking products that offer a superior passenger experience while strengthening their brand positioning.

As expectations continue to evolve, design, material quality and interior ambience are becoming just as important as engineering and performance. It is within this changing landscape that LaVie+ has been developed.







Inspired by the French word La Vie, meaning "Life", the coach has been conceived around the idea of delivering a more refined travel experience.

The "+" in its name represents the company's emphasis on enhanced comfort, elegance, safety and overall passenger satisfaction.

Rather than relying on elaborate styling, Synaty has adopted a restrained design approach. The coach combines clean lines with premium materials to create interiors that are sophisticated without appearing excessive. Extensive use of ABS and FRP components provides a clean finish while improving durability and simplifying maintenance important considerations for operators managing

high-utilisation fleets. The interior has been finished using premium PU leather across the seats and side panels, creating an elegant and contemporary ambience.

Memory-foam pillows have been integrated into every berth to improve passenger comfort during long-distance journeys, while carefully designed lighting further enhances the travel environment.

For Synaty Automotive, however, aesthetics alone are not enough. Safety remains central to the company's design philosophy.

LaVie+ incorporates fire-retardant grade interior materials along with components sourced from established suppliers such as Mayur and Rejin, reflecting the company's continued focus on





"Our objective with LaVie+ was never to create a bus that simply looks premium. We wanted to build a coach where every design decision serves a purpose whether it improves passenger comfort, enhances safety or delivers greater long-term value to operators. The response at Prawaas reaffirmed that this is exactly what the market is looking for."

Naresh Yadav
Founder, Synaty Automotive





quality, durability and passenger protection. The positive reception also reflects Synaty Automotive's broader manufacturing philosophy. Over the past year, the company has distinguished itself through a structured, process-driven approach to bus body manufacturing.

From rigorous quality control and disciplined workflow management to early adoption of AIS 153 certification for sleeper coaches, Synaty has consistently focused on engineering excellence rather than simply expanding production.

That philosophy extends directly into products like LaVie+, where every material and every component has been selected to balance comfort, functionality and long-term reliability.

"The premium coach market is evolving rapidly. Operators today are looking for products that not only meet safety standards but also elevate the passenger experience. LaVie+ reflects our vision of building coaches that combine simplicity, premium quality and thoughtful engineering," adds Yadav.

The strong response at Prawaas 5.0 also signals a broader trend within India's bus industry.

Passenger expectations are rising, and operators increasingly recognise that interior quality, comfort and overall travel experience have become important differentiators in a highly competitive market.

For Synaty Automotive, LaVie+ represents more than a new product launch. It demonstrates how a young company can combine structured manufacturing, design-led thinking and customer-focused engineering to compete in one of India's most demanding mobility segments.



Prawaas 5.0 Confirmed One Thing: Collaboration Will Define the Next Phase of India's Bus Industry

By Kartik Garg



Prawaas has evolved into much more than an exhibition. It has become a reflection of where India's bus and coach industry stands today, and perhaps more importantly, where it is headed. Every edition brings together OEMs, bus body builders, fleet operators, component suppliers and technology providers on a common platform. While new products and technologies naturally attract attention, the real value lies in the conversations that happen around them. It is these discussions that often shape future partnerships, identify emerging challenges and influence the direction of the industry. For me, Prawaas 5.0 reaffirmed that India's bus ecosystem is entering a phase where collaboration will be just as important as innovation.



A Platform That Brings the Industry Together

One of the biggest strengths of Prawaas is its ability to bring every stakeholder under one roof. It creates an environment where businesses can engage directly with customers, partners and peers, making discussions far more meaningful than virtual meetings or routine business interactions.

At INALCO, the event gave us the opportunity to interact with OEMs, bus body builders, fleet operators and other industry partners. Beyond showcasing our aluminium solutions, it was equally valuable to understand how customer expectations are evolving and where the industry is placing its focus.

The strong interest in lightweight aluminium applications was particularly encouraging. It reflects a broader shift in thinking, where manufacturers are increasingly evaluating materials not only from the perspective of cost but also performance, durability and long-term value.

An Industry Entering Its Next Growth Phase

India's bus industry is witnessing significant transformation. Government investments in public transportation, the rapid expansion of electric mobility and rising passenger expectations are creating new opportunities across the value chain.

At the same time, manufacturers are under greater pressure to improve efficiency without compromising safety, reliability or passenger comfort. These changing priorities are influencing material selection, vehicle design and manufacturing practices. In this environment, lightweight materials such as aluminium are expected to play an increasingly important role. Reducing vehicle weight contributes to better energy efficiency, while corrosion resistance and lower maintenance requirements help improve the total cost of ownership over the vehicle's lifecycle.

The industry is also placing greater emphasis on premium aesthetics and long-term durability. Material innovation, therefore, is no longer limited to engineering performance alone. It is becoming an important contributor to the overall passenger experience and product quality.

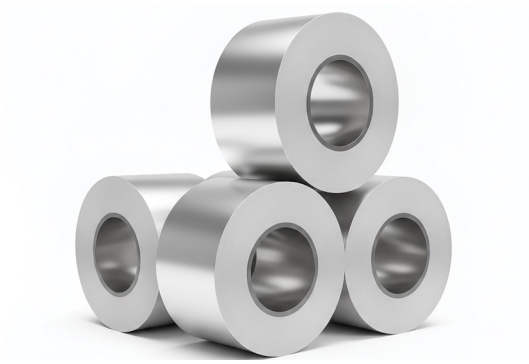
Partnerships Will Drive Progress

One observation that stood out during Prawaas was the willingness across the industry to work more closely together. No single organisation can address the evolving demands of the market in isolation. Whether it is developing



new vehicle platforms, introducing sustainable materials or improving manufacturing processes, progress increasingly depends on collaboration between OEMs, body builders, suppliers and technology partners.

Industry platforms such as Prawaas provide the foundation for these partnerships by enabling direct dialogue and knowledge sharing. Face-to-face conversations continue to build trust in ways that digital communication often cannot. As the sector grows, these relationships will become even more valuable in accelerating innovation and delivering better solutions to customers.



Innovation Must Remain a Continuous Process

The pace of change within the bus and coach industry leaves little room for complacency. Customer expectations continue to evolve, regulations are becoming more demanding and competition is driving higher standards across every aspect of vehicle manufacturing. For suppliers, this means continuous investment in product development, quality improvement and manufacturing excellence. At INALCO, we remain focused on expanding our portfolio of aluminium solutions, including plain sheets, chequered sheets, diamond-pattern products and colour-coated sheets, while maintaining consistency, reliability and customer service. Our objective is not simply to supply materials but to support manufacturers with solutions that help them build stronger, lighter and more durable buses for the future.



Looking Beyond the Exhibition

The optimism visible throughout Prawaas 5.0 reflects the confidence of an industry that is ready to embrace change and enter its next phase of growth.

The conversations during the exhibition went beyond individual products and business opportunities. They reflected a shared ambition to build a stronger, safer, more efficient and sustainable bus ecosystem for India. Achieving this will require closer collaboration across the value chain, bringing together OEMs, bus body builders, fleet operators, component manufacturers and technology partners.

For us at INALCO, Prawaas reinforced the importance of staying connected with the industry and understanding the evolving challenges faced by manufacturers. Innovation is most valuable when it translates into practical solutions that deliver lasting value.

As India's bus and coach sector continues to grow, collaboration will remain a key driver of progress. When the ecosystem comes together with shared knowledge, openness and a willingness to innovate, we can build a stronger foundation for the future of Indian mobility.



About The Author

Kartik Garg is a Director at INALCO, contributing to the company's strategic growth and expanding presence in India's aluminium industry. With a keen understanding of the manufacturing landscape and evolving market dynamics, he focuses on strengthening business relationships, driving innovation, and creating sustainable growth opportunities. His forward-looking approach supports INALCO's vision of delivering excellence and building a stronger future for aluminium.

Prawaas 5.0: Inside India's Biggest Passenger Mobility Show

Gandhinagar plays host as BOCI marks a decade with its largest-ever edition - 20,000+ visitors, 227 exhibitors, a wave of new launches and 72 award winners. Here's the complete wrap.





For three days in July, the Helipad Exhibition Centre (HEC) in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, became the epicentre of India's passenger transport industry.

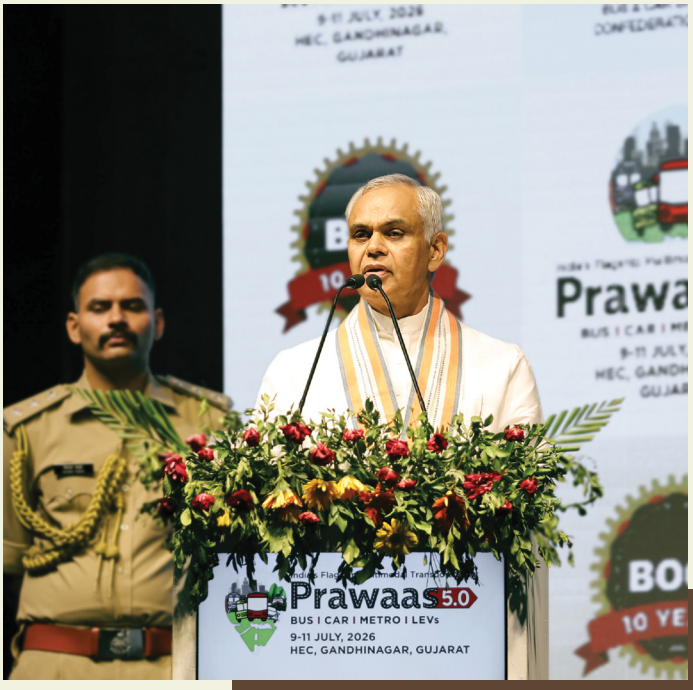
Prawaas 5.0, held from 9th to 11th July 2026, brought together government representatives, transport operators, vehicle manufacturers, mobility technology companies and industry stakeholders under a single roof - and in doing so, delivered its largest and most consequential edition yet.

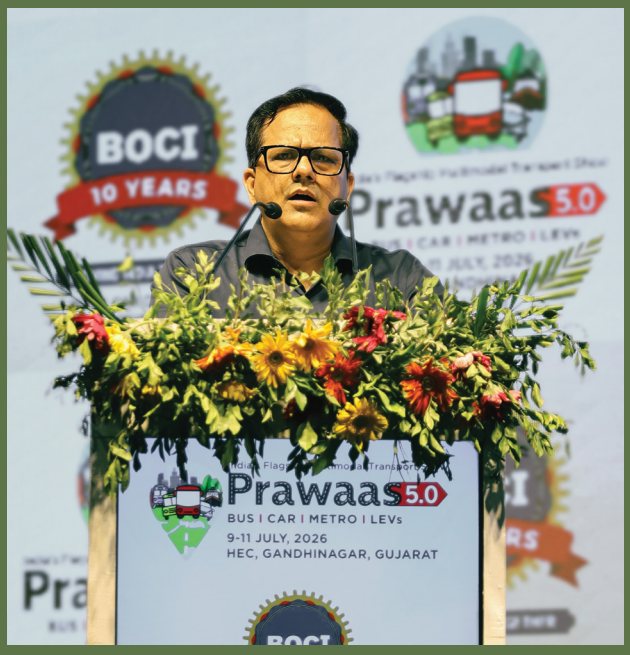


Organised by the Bus & Car Operators Confederation of India (BOCI), with MM Activ Sci-Tech Communications Pvt. Ltd. curating the event, Prawaas 5.0 arrived at a symbolic moment: BOCI's tenth anniversary.

The Confederation used the milestone to stage its biggest show to date, hosted by the Akhil Gujarat Pravasi Vahan Sanchalak Mahamandal and co-hosted by the Gujarat Luxury Cab Owners Association and the Gujarat Tourist Vehicles Operators Association.









Held under the theme "Towards Safe, Smart & Sustainable Passenger Mobility," and carrying forward BOCI's "Desh Ki Raftaar" spirit, the edition aimed to align government agencies, operators, OEMs, startups, financiers and civil society around a single, multimodal vision of Indian mobility - one integrating buses, metro systems, taxis and last-mile connectivity.

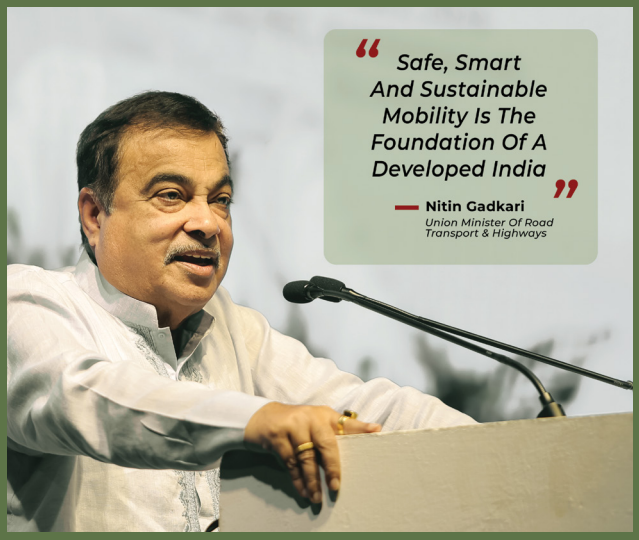
The exhibition itself was billed as India's largest showcase of passenger transport technology, spanning vehicle manufacturers, component suppliers, EV and charging infrastructure companies, smart mobility and fleet management providers, digital technology firms, alternative fuel and lubricant suppliers, and a strong contingent of mobility startups.



The Numbers Behind The Show

REGISTRATIONS	EXHIBITORS	STARTUPS	CONFERENCE SESSIONS
20,129	227	20	15

SPEAKERS	STATES & UTs	COUNTRIES	AWARD WINNERS
120+	31	11	72



A Ceremonial Start, A Ministerial Address

Prawaas 5.0 opened with a ceremonial lamp lighting by Smt. Miraben Patel, Mayor of Gandhinagar, in the presence of Shri Kaushik Jain, MLA for Dariapur, who attended as Guest of Honour.

The inauguration set the tone for three days devoted to innovation, collaboration and dialogue on the future of passenger transport.

The event's centrepiece address came from Shri Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, who inaugurated the Bharat Prawaas Awards and reaffirmed the Government of India's commitment to a safe, smart and sustainable passenger mobility ecosystem.



Gadkari described clean transport as *"the need of the hour"*, telling delegates that the Centre and state governments share a clear vision for accelerating sustainable public transport adoption.

He pointed to proven technology, raw material availability, economic viability and marketability as the pillars on which the mobility sector's long-term success would rest, framing them within the principles of Ethics, Economy, Ecology and Environment.

Indigenous technology and manufacturing, he added, would be central to generating employment while strengthening India's clean mobility ecosystem.

Gujarat's own leadership was well represented through the event: Dr. Rajender Kumar, Commissioner of the state's Transport Department, co-inaugurated the conference programme alongside ixigo Group CEO Shri Aloke Bajpai, while Shri Pravinbhai Mali, Gujarat's Transport Minister, and Shri Dineshbhai Makwana, Member of Parliament from Ahmedabad, both toured the exhibition floor on the closing day.





New Metal On The Floor: The Launches That Defined Prawaas 5.0

If Prawaas has increasingly become India's preferred platform for product debuts, the 2026 edition firmly reinforced that position.

Almost every major bus OEM chose Gandhinagar to unveil new electric, diesel or CNG offerings, transforming the exhibition into a true industry showcase.

The launches reflected the sector's rapid evolution, driven by changing regulations, advancing technology and the growing demand for safer, smarter and more sustainable mobility.

Tata Ultra Prime and Starbus Prime

Tata Motors introduced its new-generation Ultra Prime and Starbus Prime bus range, alongside CNG and battery-electric vehicles spanning intercity, intracity, school, tourism and last-mile applications.

The refreshed platforms bring updated exterior styling, redesigned interiors and reduced noise, vibration and harshness (NVH), along with 29 safety features including a Driver Monitoring System, 360-degree camera and Intelligent Transport Systems.

The showcase included the CNG-powered LPO 1620, the Ultra Prime LPO 412 for tourism routes, the electric Ultra Skool 9/9 EV school bus — offered with an optional paint scheme designed for neurodivergent children's comfort — the Magic EV last-mile vehicle, and the India-first Ultra Prime RE Concept for urban operations.





Next Generation JBM GALAXY Seater-Sleeper

JBM unveiled the next-generation GALAXY electric luxury coach, launched by Minister Gadkari himself in the presence of Nishant Arya, Chairman of JBM Electric Vehicles.

The platform now spans seater, sleeper-and-seater, and full-sleeper variants, with the new sleeper-seater offered in two layouts — 22 reclining seats with 20 berths and an onboard washroom, or 24 seats with 20 berths without one.

JBM says the coach has demonstrated runs exceeding 900 km a day, and the company currently holds the largest share of India's premium intercity electric coach segment, with over 3,300 electric buses deployed across 17 states and an order book exceeding 10,000 units.



Volvo 9600 Seater-Sleeper

Volvo Buses India showcased the Volvo 9600 Seater-Sleeper, a premium OE-built coach featuring 24 upper sleeper berths and 27 lower-deck seats with calf support, offering operators greater flexibility for both short- and long-distance travel.

The coach boasts refreshed interiors, enhanced mood lighting, mobile charging points, privacy features, and integrated entertainment provisions. It also introduces advanced safety technologies, including a 360-degree camera system and Electronic Mirrors (Camera Monitor System) to improve driver visibility and overall road safety.

Switch Mobility EiV9

SWITCH Mobility, which led India's e-bus registrations in H1 2026 with a 28.2% market share, introduced its 9-metre EiV9 alongside an updated EiV12 Intercity model. The EiV9 runs on a PMVR motor delivering up to 213 kW, with dual-gun CCS2 fast charging and regenerative braking; the EiV12 pairs floor-mounted LFP batteries with a pneumatic driver seat and camera-based digital mirrors. SWITCH used the launch to introduce its #SwitchKaro campaign, aimed at accelerating fleet operator adoption of electric mobility.





Tirth Automobiles Arya

Tirth Automobiles entered the luxury coach segment at Prawaas 5.0 with its premium sleeper and seater bus built on an Eicher chassis. The vehicle features a bold front fascia and striking exterior styling. Inside, the coach sports neat interiors styled in a clean white and black color palette, paired with comfortable reclinable sofa seats designed for optimal passenger travel. Built to rigorous safety and structural standards, this model highlights Tirth's rising manufacturing capabilities in the premium segment.

MG Starz

MG Group has unveiled Starz, its next-generation premium coach platform designed to redefine premium passenger mobility. Developed through extensive customer feedback, Starz combines contemporary design, enhanced safety, superior passenger comfort, and improved operational efficiency. The platform will be offered in multiple configurations for intercity, tourism, staff transport, and premium fleet operations, with both diesel and alternate-fuel powertrain options. MG Group has also secured an initial order for 50 Starz coaches following its launch. The launch reinforces MG Group's ambition to strengthen its presence in the premium coach segment.





EKA 9M Electric School Bus

EKA Mobility has expanded its electric commercial vehicle portfolio with the launch of the EKA 9M Electric School Bus, marking its entry into the electric school transportation segment.

Built on the company's lightweight monocoque platform, the 9-metre bus accommodates up to 43 passengers and is equipped with a high-strength steel structure, AIS 052-compliant safety standards, Electronic Braking System (EBS), Electronic Stability Control (ESC), and air suspension.

The bus is offered with 100 kWh and 200 kWh LFP battery pack options, delivering a claimed range of up to 180 km. It also supports CCS2 fast charging, enabling a full recharge in under one hour and 45 minutes.

At Prawaas 5.0, EKA Mobility also showcased its wider electric mobility portfolio, including the EKA Coach, EKA 12M Low Entry Electric Bus, EKA 3S and EKA 6S. The expanded line-up highlights the company's focus on providing electric solutions across city transit, institutional transportation and last-mile passenger mobility.

The EKA 9M Electric School Bus is positioned as a purpose-built solution for the growing adoption of sustainable transportation by educational institutions, combining safety, efficiency and technology for school mobility.

Bharat Prawaas Awards 2026: 72 Winners, Two Platforms



Day two belonged to the Bharat Prawaas Awards 2026, presented by Shri Acharya Devvrat, Governor of Gujarat, in a ceremony that recognised outstanding contributions across India's public transport sector.

In all, 72 winners were honoured across two award platforms - the BOCI Excellence Awards, which recognised 50 organisations and individuals across categories spanning innovation, operational excellence, sustainability and safety, and the redBus People's Choice Awards, which honoured 22 winners chosen by public vote.

The redBus People's Choice Awards, presented with redBus as Awards Partner in the presence of its CEO Shri Prakash Sangam, draw directly on passenger sentiment.

In June 2026, redBus ran a nationwide poll on its platform inviting travellers to vote for their preferred operators on punctuality, service quality and overall experience.

The initiative has been tied to Prawaas since 2017. Alongside the awards, the exhibition floor continued to draw strong footfall from business visitors, with innovations on display from OEMs, component manufacturers, aggregators, EV and energy storage companies, fleet management solution providers, and a healthy showing of startups and first-time innovators.

Five Conversations That Shaped The Conference Floor

Beyond the exhibition halls, Prawaas 5.0's 15 conference sessions offered a window into where India's passenger transport industry is headed next.

Co-hosted by AbhiBus and inaugurated by ixigo Group CEO Shri Aloke Bajpai, the conference programme covered a wide sweep of themes — from electrification and bus policy reform to school bus transformation, women in mobility, toll policy, insurance, operator empowerment, mobility startups and "The Future Mobility Stack."

Electrifying school transport: With school transportation still overwhelmingly diesel-powered even as public transport electrifies rapidly elsewhere, sessions examined how financing, charging infrastructure and policy support could accelerate electric school bus adoption — while also improving children's health and reducing urban emissions.

Women at the wheel: Curated by the BOCI Women's Wing, discussions examined the growing role of women as entrepreneurs, policymakers and professionals across the mobility ecosystem, and what it will take to build safer workplaces and a more inclusive industry.

The future mobility stack: Panels explored how technology, capital and clean energy infrastructure are becoming the true building blocks of modern transport systems — reinforcing a growing industry consensus that vehicle technology alone cannot deliver sustainable mobility.

Solving the driver shortage: Curated by WRI, sessions addressed India's persistent driver



shortage, and how technology, structured training and digital verification could strengthen recruitment and long-term career development for drivers.

The operator's perspective: A dedicated session brought operators themselves to the stage to discuss the everyday realities of running a transport business — financing, taxation, workforce shortages and regulatory friction — grounding the week's more abstract conversations in operational reality.

Building Bridges Beyond Business

Two Memorandums of Understanding were signed during the event, both involving Rotary International District 3080. The first, with BOCI Naari — BOCI's women's wing — will implement the "Women at the Steering Wheel" initiative to promote the skilling, licensing, employment and self-ownership of women as professional drivers across India.

The second, signed with BOCI directly, focuses on the mental well-being of drivers and their families alongside broader road safety awareness.

Exhibitor Awards were also handed out to recognise organisations for innovation, excellence and their contribution to advancing passenger mobility solutions — a fitting complement to the Bharat Prawaas Awards' operator- and passenger-facing recognition.

Looking At The Future

As the valedictory session drew Prawaas 5.0 to a close, BOCI's leadership - Chairman Shri Jagdeo Singh Khalsa, President Shri Prasanna Patwardhan, National Vice President Shri Alah Baksh Afzal, General Secretary Shri Dharmaraj D. R., Treasurer Shri Harsh Kotak, Convenor Shri Siddiq Gandhi and MM Activ's Executive Chairman Shri Jagdish Patankar - reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening India's passenger transport ecosystem through collaboration, innovation and progressive policy engagement.

For an industry that has spent the past decade professionalising itself in full public view - through safety certification, electrification, premiumisation and now, a more organised approach to policy dialogue - Prawaas 5.0 offered both a scoreboard and a preview.

The launches showed how fast the product side of the business is moving; the awards showed how operators and passengers are being brought into that story; and the conference sessions made clear that financing, driver welfare and multimodal integration remain the unfinished business the industry must tackle next.

With BOCI's first decade behind it and Prawaas already established as India's leading platform for passenger mobility dialogue, the industry's attention now turns to how many of Gandhinagar's announcements — from Starz's 50-unit order to SUN Mobility's swapping architecture — translate into vehicles on Indian roads before the next edition comes around.

Prawaas 5.0 highlighted a clear shift in the industry's priorities.

The conversations made it evident that the future of passenger mobility will be shaped not just by new vehicles, but by stronger collaboration across the ecosystem. The event also underscored the growing role of digital technologies, from fleet management and predictive maintenance to passenger information systems, in building a smarter, more efficient and connected mobility ecosystem.

SWITCH Mobility Expands Electric Bus Portfolio with New EiV9



SWITCH Mobility has strengthened its presence in India's electric bus market with the launch of the **EiV9**, a new 9-metre electric bus unveiled at Prawaas 5.0.

Developed for city transport, employee mobility and school operations, the new platform has been designed to offer a balance of operational efficiency, passenger comfort and safety while addressing the evolving needs of fleet operators.

The EiV9 enters a segment that is expected to see increasing adoption as public transport agencies, educational institutions and corporate fleets accelerate their transition to electric mobility. The bus has been engineered to deliver a lower total cost of ownership without compromising on performance or operational flexibility.

Powering the EiV9 is a Permanent Magnet Variable Reluctance (PMVR) motor delivering up to 213 kW of peak power. Operators can select from multiple battery configurations based on route requirements, while regenerative braking and dual-gun CCS2 fast charging are aimed at improving energy efficiency and maximising vehicle availability. The lightweight architecture further contributes to reduced running costs.

Passenger comfort has also received significant attention. The bus features a spacious interior with front and rear air suspension, ergonomic seating, individual USB charging ports and optional pushback seats for employee transportation applications. Safety features include a Fire Detection and Suppression System (FDSS), disc brakes on both axles and an electric architecture designed for dependable operation across varied conditions.

Speaking at the launch, Ganesh Mani, CEO of SWITCH Mobility, said the company expects strong growth in the 9-metre electric bus category, citing rising demand from public transport authorities, corporate mobility providers and institutional fleet operators.

He added that the EiV9 has been developed to deliver higher efficiency, enhanced passenger comfort, advanced safety and lower operating costs. Alongside the new launch, the company also showcased the upgraded EiV12 Intercity electric bus featuring premium reclining seats, floor-mounted LFP batteries, digital ORVMs and the SWITCH iON connected vehicle platform. The launch highlights the growing importance of the 9-metre electric bus segment as operators look for right-sized, zero-emission solutions for urban, employee and school transport. It also reflects how manufacturers are diversifying their electric bus portfolios to address specialised applications rather than relying solely on standard 12-metre platforms.

SWITCH EIV9 SPECIFICATIONS

Motor	: Permanent Magnet Variable Reluctance (PMVR)
Peak Power	: 213 kW
Battery Options	: Multiple battery pack configurations
Charging	: Dual-gun CCS2 DC fast charging
Suspension	: Front and rear air suspension
Safety	: Fire Detection and Suppression System (FDSS)
Passenger Features	: Ergonomic seating, USB charging ports, optional pushback seats



Redefining Premium Bus Travel

Volvo Launches 9600 *Seater-Sleeper*



Volvo Buses India has expanded its premium coach portfolio with the introduction of the **Volvo 9600 Seater-Sleeper** at PRAWAAS 5.0 in Gandhinagar. Designed to combine seating and sleeper travel on a single platform, the new 15-metre coach has been developed for both short- and long-distance operations, offering operators greater flexibility while enhancing passenger comfort.

The launch comes as India's intercity bus market continues to evolve, with passengers demanding higher levels of comfort and luxury, while operators look for solutions that improve fleet utilisation. The introduction of a seater-sleeper configuration reflects the growing trend of maximising revenue potential by serving multiple travel segments with a single vehicle.

"The Volvo 9600 Seater-Sleeper combines globally proven engineering with innovations tailored to the changing needs of the Indian market."

— **S S Gill**, Chief Commercial Officer, VE Commercial Vehicles

BUILT FOR LONG-DISTANCE OPERATIONS

The Volvo 9600 Seater-Sleeper is powered by Volvo's fuel-efficient VEDX8 engine paired with the I-Shift automated transmission.

FOCUS ON PASSENGER COMFORT AND SAFETY

The coach features refreshed interiors, premium seating and berth layouts, ambient lighting, mobile charging points and integrated entertainment provisions.

Passenger convenience is further enhanced with an onboard toilet and a fully integrated kitchenette, making the vehicle suitable for tourism and long-haul operations.

Volvo has also equipped the coach with an extensive suite of safety technologies, including a 360-degree camera system, Electronic Mirrors, Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS), Driver State Monitoring System and an Alcohol Interlock System. A connected telematics platform provides operators with real-time information on vehicle performance, fuel consumption and fleet operations.

"Building on the success of the Volvo 9600 platform, the new Seater-Sleeper offers operators greater flexibility without compromising passenger comfort."

— **Suresh Chettiar,** Executive VP, Bus Division, VE Commercial Vehicles

MEETING THE NEXT PHASE OF PREMIUM MOBILITY

The launch underscores the changing dynamics of India's premium coach market, where operators are increasingly investing in versatile, high-value vehicles that can serve multiple route profiles while enhancing passenger experience.

VOLVO 9600 SEATER-SLEEPER SPECIFICATIONS

Length	: 15 metres
Engine	: Volvo VEDX8
Transmission	: Volvo I-Shift
Passenger Capacity	: 51
Layout	: 27 premium seats, 24 sleeper berths
Luggage Capacity	: 6 cu. m
Amenities	: Onboard toilet, kitchenette, USB charging, mood lighting
Safety	: 360° camera, TPMS, Electronic Mirrors, Driver State Monitoring System, Alcohol Interlock System

MG GROUP Bets Big on Premium Mobility STARZ



MG Group has introduced Starz, its next-generation premium coach platform, at PRAWAAS 5.0, marking a significant addition to its premium mobility portfolio. Developed after extensive engagement with fleet operators and OEM partners, the new platform has been designed to balance passenger comfort, operational efficiency and long-term ownership value.

The launch reflects the increasing shift towards purpose-built premium coach platforms as operators seek vehicles that deliver better passenger experience while improving fleet profitability.

DESIGNED FOR DIVERSE APPLICATIONS

Rather than focusing on a single application, Starz has been developed as a flexible platform capable of serving multiple segments, including intercity travel, tourism, staff transportation and institutional mobility. Customers will also have the option of choosing between diesel and alternate-fuel variants depending on their operational requirements.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Multiple configurations for different applications
- Diesel and alternate-fuel powertrain options
- Designed for intercity, tourism, staff and institutional transport
- Bookings open from July 2026
- Initial order of 50 coaches confirmed following the launch
- Expected starting price: ₹39 lakh (application dependent)
- Engineering Backed by Manufacturing Strength

FOCUS ON SAFETY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Safety remains central to the Starz platform, with emphasis on structural strength, fire safety, passenger evacuation systems, vehicle stability and driver ergonomics. Alongside safety, MG Group is also investing in lightweight engineering and sustainable manufacturing practices aimed at reducing lifecycle costs and improving operational efficiency.

The growing focus on regulatory compliance and lightweight construction highlights how coach manufacturers are preparing for a market where safety, efficiency and sustainability are becoming key purchasing criteria.

LOOKING BEYOND THE LAUNCH

With Starz, MG Group is looking to strengthen its position in the premium coach segment while responding to changing customer expectations. As India's premium bus market becomes increasingly competitive, manufacturers are differentiating themselves not only through design and comfort, but also through engineering capability, manufacturing quality and long-term operating economics.

> *"Starz is our response to a market that increasingly values safety, efficiency and premium travel experience."*



Anil Mohan Kamat
Chairman & Managing Director, MG Group

Tata Motors Expands Passenger Mobility Portfolio with New Prime Bus Range



At Prawaas 5.0, Tata Motors unveiled the Ultra Prime and Starbus Prime range of buses, while showcasing one of its most comprehensive passenger mobility portfolios to date.

Covering school, staff, tourism, intercity, intracity and last-mile applications, the display reflected the company's strategy of offering application-specific mobility solutions across conventional and electric powertrains.

Rather than focusing on a single product, Tata Motors showcased a portfolio approach, highlighting how operators increasingly require specialised vehicles tailored to different passenger mobility applications.

A NEW GENERATION OF PRIME BUSES

The Ultra Prime and Starbus Prime range features refreshed styling, upgraded interiors, improved ride quality and lower NVH levels, while incorporating 29 advanced safety features including a Driver Monitoring System, 360-degree camera, Intelligent Transport System (ITS) and Reverse Parking Assistance System.

"Every mobility application has unique requirements. Our focus is to deliver purpose-built solutions that improve uptime, operating economics and passenger experience,"

- Anand S, Vice President & Business Head Commercial Passenger Vehicles, Tata Motors Ltd.

Beyond the Prime range, Tata Motors displayed a diverse line-up including the LPO 1620 CNG, Ultra Prime LPO 412, Ultra Skool 9/9 EV, Ultra Prime RE Concept, Magic EV and Winger Plus.

ULTRA PRIME & STARBUS PRIME HIGHLIGHTS

School, staff and tourism applications
Refreshed design and interiors
Improved ride quality with lower NVH
29 advanced safety features
Driver Monitoring System
360° camera
Intelligent Transport System (ITS)
Reverse Parking Assistance System (RPAS)
A Solution for Every Segment

Together, the portfolio addresses applications ranging from urban and intercity transport to school mobility, tourism and last-mile connectivity.

SUPPORTING OPERATORS BEYOND THE BUS

Tata Motors also highlighted its nationwide support ecosystem of more than 4,600 sales and service touchpoints, backed by Sampoorna Seva 2.0, fleet management solutions and Tata Genuine Parts.
The showcase demonstrates how the passenger vehicle market is moving towards complete mobility ecosystems, where vehicles, aftersales support, connectivity and multiple fuel technologies are becoming equally important in fleet purchasing decisions.



BharatBenz Introduces Torqshift 1926 AMT Chassis for Intercity Operations

Daimler India Commercial Vehicles (DICV) has expanded its BharatBenz bus portfolio with the launch of the Torqshift 1926, a heavy-duty bus chassis equipped with an Automated Manual Transmission (AMT).

Unveiled in Ahmedabad, the new chassis has been developed for intercity and staff transportation, where operators are increasingly seeking higher operational efficiency, improved driver comfort and lower lifecycle costs.

The Torqshift 1926 combines a 260 hp engine with BharatBenz's globally proven Torqshift AMT, which automatically selects the optimal gear based on driving conditions. By eliminating frequent clutch and gear operation, the system is designed to reduce driver fatigue while delivering smoother performance on long-distance routes.

According to the company, the chassis has been optimised for routes of up to 500 km, with the potential to reduce the requirement for two drivers on longer operations. The automated transmission is also expected to improve fuel efficiency by ensuring consistent gear selection while lowering wear and tear on drivetrain components.

The chassis is equipped with a range of driver assistance and safety technologies, including Eco Roll, multiple drive modes, cruise control, hill start assist, tyre pressure and temperature monitoring, indigenous glide air suspension, and a five-stage electromagnetic retarder.

Together, these features are intended to enhance vehicle control, improve passenger comfort and reduce operating costs.

Speaking at the launch, Andamuthu Ponnusamy, Head of Bus Business at Daimler India Commercial Vehicles, said the Torqshift 1926 has been developed to help fleet operators improve productivity while reducing downtime and maintenance expenses.

He noted that the AMT enables a more consistent driving experience, particularly on long-haul routes where driver fatigue remains a key operational challenge.

Alongside the new chassis, DICV also introduced the BharatBenz 917, an 8-metre fully built bus designed for school and staff transportation.

Developed for operations on urban and semi-urban routes, the bus combines passenger comfort with a comprehensive safety package.

It comes equipped with ABS, Electronic Vehicle Stability Control (EVSC), seat belts for all passengers, a fire detection and protection system, a large emergency exit door, and an optional PM2.5 air purification system.

Passenger amenities include air conditioning, ergonomic seating, anti-skid flooring, under-seat storage and a retractable lower footstep for easier boarding and alighting.

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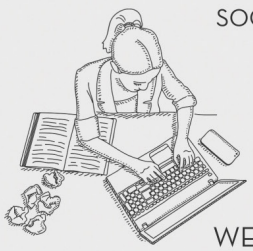
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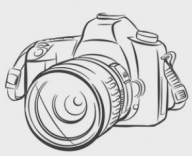
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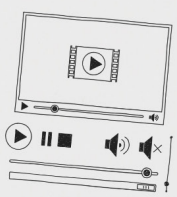
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