



# JCBL Plays A Significant Role In India's EV Revolution

As a preferred partner of Switch Mobility, JCBL is contributing to the supply of zero-emission buses for North Indian cities under the Fame-II scheme.

**Gaurav Nandi**

The Government of India has been actively trying to orchestrate a paradigm shift in the public transport segment. Electric mobility has been dominating the roads with an increasing number of buses, four-wheelers etc. Moreover, various tailor-made schemes of the central government are also playing an

instrumental role in bolstering the manufacturing of electric vehicles (EV) as well as local lithium-ion cell producing units that power these green automobiles.

Established in 1989, Mohali-based customised mobility solutions provider JCBL has been constantly adapting to the needs of the Indian mobility space. With manufacturing facilities in Punjab and Chennai, it is a leading manufacturer of school buses, election campaigning vans, blood donation vans etc.

Speaking about the company's measures in the electric mobility segment, Managing Director Rishi Aggarwal informed, "Electric mobility has revolutionised the transportation space. And JCBL too is playing a significant role in this revolution. So far, we have built and supplied 40 electric buses to Ashok Leyland for the Chandigarh city bus services under the Fame-II scheme."

"Being a preferred partner of Switch Mobility, we are working together to supply zero-emission buses for other northern cities under the Fame-II scheme. Besides this, we are also supplying buses to private players for intercity school and staff application buses. JCBL is already a part of the EV bus ecosystem and we are working towards

contributing to the carbon neutrality goals," he added.

The company's vision is to manufacture high-quality mobility solutions with a high degree of customisation in the domain of passenger transportation, healthcare, special applications, logistics, mining and construction.

"When we started, Swaraj Mazda was our first customer. But today, we have partnered with several other players. Our journey has been very exciting and today we are one of the most preferred manufacturers with a strong customer base of leading OEMs like Tata Motors, Ashok Leyland, SML Isuzu, Daimler, Mahindra, Volvo, Eicher Motors etc.," said Aggarwal.

The company also makes vehicles for ISRO, DRDO, Ministry of Health, NACO, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Transportation and many more. Its continuous research and development have enabled it to provide highly customised mobility solutions to meet the demands of customers.

Recently, the Government of Kerala launched its caravan programme to bolster tourism in the state. JCBL was given the responsibility to manufacture the body of the vehicle.





Commenting on the initiative taken by the company to promote caravan tourism, the executive contended, "Caravan tourism has long been a popular niche segment within experiential tourism around the world. However, it has become more popular now, especially in the post-pandemic era. It is an affordable travel option that offers flexibility, safety and privacy, all of which have become important aspects for travellers. Besides, travelling in a motor caravan gives an immense sense of freedom, which is the very purpose of travel. People have now started to experiment with their road trips, and this trend is here to stay."

As the caravan tourism ecosystem is being developed, with private investors, tour operators and local communities being the major stakeholders, various state governments are also providing subsidies to caravan operators. States like Kerala, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh are the front runners in promoting caravan tourism.

Some of these states have also come out with a caravan tourism policy to promote the development and establishment of caravan parks and have laid down the processes and procedures for its operation

and approvals. The states' inclusive approach to leveraging the tourism potential of unexplored spots is driving caravan tourism.

"JCBL has been selected as a preferred partner for developing motor caravan for the Government of Kerala in partnership with BharatBenz. We have already received all the necessary approvals, including the homologation approval. We are now in the process of delivering the first lot of 10 motorhomes to various customers for travel, leisure and stay. Since there is very encouraging business visibility of these motor caravans, we are in the process of developing a few more customised motor caravans for various other stakeholders within the price range of INR 4.5 million to INR 9 million" added Aggarwal.

Explaining the superiority of their vehicles, the executive averred, "The main differentiator is in the making of our product that ultimately leads to customer satisfaction. Our products go through the well-defined new product development process, which includes covering the market survey, concept development, planning, prototyping, meeting the various regulatory requirements of the government and involving various stakeholders,





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including chassis manufacturers, end-users etc. It also follows the homologation process as per the required relevant standards followed by testing, product development and commercialisation. We also have a very strong customer feedback system and after-sales support to add value to our products.”

The company also makes armoured vehicles for homeland security. Speaking about the dynamics of such vehicles, the managing director said, “We have pioneered in engineering, designing, prototyping and series production of armoured vehicles for the government, military and paramilitary operations. We implement the latest technology in laser cutting and bending, which does not affect the material structure, resulting in maintaining the original properties of the armoured steel being used with utmost safety and security.”

“The standard specification includes protection levels such as CEN B7, STANAG Level2, multi-layered ballistic glass, gun hatch/fire ports, run-flat tyres system, tyre inflation system, clamshell door and some added options also, including the driver plus 7 to 8 seating option, surveillance configuration, GPS, electronic winch, HF/VHF/UHF Radio, screen with wire mesh protection, medium machine gun mounted, camouflage net storage, blast mitigation floor mat, technical command and control with mapping,” he added.

JCBL's armoured vehicles portfolio includes 6- to 10-seater protection vehicles for security in VVIP cars, election vans, SUVs, tactical vans,



buses, LATC and MPV command and control vehicles. The price of its bullet-proof vehicles ranges between INR 1 million and INR 50 million depending on the various application designs required by the customer.

Speaking about the state of the current market, he said, “The commercial vehicle market went up by 14.91 percent in FY2022 as compared to March last year and the forecast, as per SIAM and FADA, is that it will reach the pre-pandemic level by 2024.”

Commenting on the major takeaways from the pandemic, Aggarwal said, “We need more databases and evidence-based decision making as health and economies are interlinked. As health is a shared responsibility, we need to have more global cooperation, public awareness, and an understanding of the effective role of media. Lastly, a clean environment and climate change should also be everyone's concern.”

“To make the business survive through Covid-19 and beyond, we introduced a few initiatives. One of them is organisational agility, which is now a central theme, to align and adapt in response to the changing market conditions and requirements. We have also turned digitalisation into an advantage as per the evolving ecosystem. Besides, we have also driven systematic

change through the cooperation of stakeholders to be self-reliant,” informed the executive while speaking on the measures taken to survive the pandemic.

Commenting on the influence of the Russia-Ukraine war, he divulged, “The Russia-Ukraine war and the lockdown in China are hitting supplies of critical components. This is adversely impacting the revival of the industries as a whole. The situation remains challenging and does not lead to a better recovery path given that the crude is also on the boil. Besides, the significant rise in raw material prices, challenges in neon gas supplies and semiconductor availability etc. continue to be a cause of concern. It is a wait-and-watch situation as of now till the war ends.”

The manufacturer is currently working on defence solutions and aerospace technologies under the 'Make in India' initiative to become self-reliant in the defence sector and to achieve the goal of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. Apart from major OEMs, its client portfolio also comprises Reliance and Adani groups.

Speaking on future plans, the executive said, “We plan to keep our market dominance in the area of our core competence and also expand further in the allied segments. Driven by the 'Make in India' programme, we think the time is right for established manufacturing houses to expand their horizons. We as a group are looking to expand further into parts and components for railways and complete system solutions for defence.”

