

# busworld newsletter



Number 21 - April 2007

This Busworld newsletter appears in January, April, August, October and December (5/year) - Afgiftekantoor 8900 Ieper 1 - P409506  
YU: BAAV - Luc Glorieux - Busworld - Kasteel van Rumbeke - Moorseelsesteenweg 2 - BE-8800 Roeselare - Tel. +32.51.22.60.60 - Fax +32.51.22.92.73

## NEW TRENDS AT BUSWORLD ASIA

The 7th edition of Busworld Asia was held in the New International Exhibition Centre in Pudong, Shanghai, from 13 to 15 March. Due to increased demand from exhibitors, two of the large exhibition halls were completely filled and there was also a large tented pavilion.

Busworld's partners in Shanghai, VNU Exhibitions Asia, confirmed that there were 188 exhibitors with the layout in the two large halls being the same as in previous years. The large stands with buses and coaches were alongside the perimeter walls. In the centre were busy aisles with stands of companies offering components and services to the bus and coach industry. VNU Exhibitions reported a total of 25,264 visitors, including 864 who came from other countries.

There were a number of notable trends in this latest edition of Busworld Asia. The focus of many of the exhibitors, especially vehicle manufacturers, was more on export than before. It was noticeable that there were many young graduates,



*There were many visitors.*

mostly smartly dressed young women, who had been recruited for their English language skills to boost sales and marketing activities. While they might initially work as interpreters until they reach the required levels of product and business knowledge, it is a sure bet that many of them will become the export sales executives of the future. This export focus was neatly confirmed by one of those young

executives. When asked why there was not a single example of the popular Chinese sleeper coach in the whole exhibition, she replied: "Those are for the Chinese market. They are not acceptable in other countries."

There was less sign of joint ventures between Chinese manufacturers

*A gas fuelled bus from Higer.*



*A Scania with Higer coachwork.*

and partners from Western Europe, Japan and South Korea. It is well known that some have closed down, some have troubles, and one or two have changed Chinese partners.

It seems significant that Scania, a shrewdly-run company with a



*This BRT vehicle by Ankai had doors on both sides.*

consistent record of profitability, has chosen to enter the Chinese market with fully built-up chassis, despite the import duties that they will incur.

There has long been concern about Chinese manufacturers making almost exact copies of leading Western European designs. Indeed, there were further new examples of this practice at Busworld Asia. However, it was refreshing to see that some Chinese companies are now sufficiently capable and



*Golden Dragon had a large stand.*

confident to develop their own distinctive designs, in some cases with assistance from European styling specialists.

The vehicles on most stands were not representative of the main volume production of their manufacturers. Most of them continue to build large numbers of low-priced medium-size vehicles. However, it is understandable that they bring new concepts to the exhibition, to encourage their customers to invest in better and more accessible vehicles.

The quality of paintwork and the interior fit and finish were of a very

*Ankai launched the Noble with this distinctive styling pillar.*



high standard on the best of the exhibits.

Continuing with the theme of promoting new concepts, there was a noticeable increase in the number of city buses with low floors.

There was a mix of layouts, some with conventional rear axles, and some with full low floor layouts, especially articulated models. Several exhibitors confirmed that the larger cities are now willing to pay the higher price of more accessible buses. Unlike Europe, the rationale is not based on wheelchair users and other disabled passengers. In China, it is simply the ability to enable large numbers of passengers to get on and off buses more quickly.



*Distinctive styling from Wuzhoulong.*

China is gearing up for two major events. Beijing will host the Olympic Games in the summer of 2008. Shanghai will hold a World Expo in 2010. That is creating demand for a higher standard of public transport. There were several Bus Rapid Transit vehicles in the exhibition, including the first bi-articulated bus in China, built by Youngman.

The rate of growth of the high capacity city bus sector was neatly summarised by Robert Koch of Hubner, the leading manufacturer of turntables and bellows systems. His company reckoned that worldwide demand in 2006 was around 4,800 systems. In the first two months of this year, his company had received enquiries for around 2,800 systems from China alone!

Some of the major cities already require Euro 3 exhaust emission limits and Hong Kong moved to Euro 4 at the same time as Europe. The rest of China still accepts Euro 2. That will change in October this year, when Euro 3 will become mandatory throughout China. At that time, the

major cities will move to Euro 4. Several engine manufacturers had stands at Busworld Asia and said that they were prepared for these changes.

Despite this improvement, there is also interest in alternative fuels and even lower emission levels. There were three buses in the exhibition that were powered by compressed natural gas, and two hybrid buses.

The Chinese believe that demand for hybrid buses will rise rapidly, if they can demonstrate significant savings in the consumption of diesel. However, as in other parts of the world, the operating cost per kilometre is an unknown factor, because of the life expectancy of the batteries.



*Huanghai showed new solo and articulated Bus Rapid Transit vehicles.*

One of the persistent topics in the exhibition was the impending consolidation of the Chinese manufacturing industry. It appears that, from next year, companies will only be able to build buses provided they satisfy five criteria. They must have capacity for at least 5,000 units per annum and at least 80% utilisation of that capacity. They must have their own dedicated research and development staff with a minimum of 35 people. They



*Beiqi Foton had a busy stand.*

will need to have an active export programme and a pre-determined level of financial standing.

When that happens, there is bound to be massive concentration of the Chinese manufacturing industry. Many of the smaller builders are likely to close down, while some of the better quality, niche, players, could well be targets for the larger groups.

Until now, much of the output of the Chinese industry has gone to meet the enormous demand from the domestic market. Exports in 2005 were estimated to be only around 4% of total production. Consolidation will create a group of manufacturers that will benefit from



*This 7.945m school bus from Yutong had 3+3 seating for young school children.*

economies of scale and low Chinese labour rates. There was a strong indication in Busworld Asia that they are gearing up for more intensive export activity.

The 8th edition of Busworld Asia will be held in Shanghai in March 2008. Because of the great demand for floor space, Busworld and VNU Exhibitions Asia, are talking of increasing capacity from 2 to 3 large halls.



## ASIAN COACH WEEK

In the days immediately before Busworld Asia, exhibitors are invited to enter their new models in Asian Coach Week. This is similar in format to the well-established European Coach Week that precedes Busworld Kortrijk, but with the major difference that 32 vehicles were entered for the tests in Shanghai.

Teams of judges from Europe and China assessed each of the entries for a number of categories, including style and appearance, driver and passenger comfort, safety equipment, ride and handling, low



*Cristiana Soanca of Tranzit, Romania, on the driving tests.*

emission levels, and so on. With so many buses and coaches to be assessed, the teams of judges were working flat out. Representatives of the various manufacturers watched closely as each vehicle was assessed, listening carefully to any comments. They all have pride in their products and are keen to receive any comments, however good or bad. For instance, at least two midicoaches had television screens suspended from the ceiling, where they could too easily come into contact with the head of a passenger entering the vehicle.

Attention to detail and the quality of some fittings were not up to European standards. One prominent European editor used the word "fiddly" on more than one occasion. On the other hand, at the top end of the range, there were some full size coaches that were very well finished.

The ride and handling tests were carried out on a large paved area adjacent to the exhibition halls. It was interesting to observe the reactions of the test drivers. There was a consistent weakness in gear-changing, particularly on midicoaches.

This was not helped by the gear gate pattern that was the complete



*The new Noble from Anhui Ankai.*



*Some of the 32 vehicles await the judges.*



*The happy prize winners at the Awards ceremony.*

## PRIZES AND WINNERS

ASIAN COACH WEEK MARCH 2007

*Coach of the Year*

*Coach Builder of the Year*

*Luxurious Coach of the Year*

*Best Midi Coach of the Year*

*Green Coach of the Year*

*Coach Appearance of the Year*

*Bus of the Year*

*Bus Builder of the Year*

*City Bus of the Year*

*Best Midi Bus of the Year*

*Green Bus of the Year*

*Bus Appearance of the Year*

*Best Safety Equipment of the Year*

*Best Driver Equipment of the Year*

*Best Electric Equipment of the Year*

*Best Coach Engine Producer of the Year*

*Best Bus Engine Producer of the Year*

*Best Air-conditioning Manufacturer of the Year*

*Best Marketing Campaign of the Year*

Xiamen King Long United (XMQ6129Y)

King Long United Suzhou/Higer

Zhejiang Yang Man Automobile (JNP6126)

Temsa (Diamond)

Shanghai Shenlong (SLK6800F1G)

Zhongtong Bus (LCK6898H)

Xiamen Golden Dragon Van (XML6127E1)

Shanghai Shenlong (SLK6126F23)

King Long United Suzhou (KLQ6127Q)

Xiamen Golden Dragon Van (XML6127E1)

Zhengzhou Yutong (ZK6181HG)

Dandong Huanghai (DD6187S01)

Wuxi Anyuan (PK6120AG)

Xiamen Golden Dragon Van (XML6745J13C)

Scania

Shenzhou Wuzhoulong (FDG6111HEVG)

Zhongtong Bus (LCK6120G-3)

King Long United Suzhou (KLQ6127Q)

Xiamen Xococo New Technic

DAF Components

Scania

Ingersoll Rand (China) Investment

Shanghai Jialeng

Zhengzhou Yutong

reverse of European standards, with the lower gears being further from the driver's hand.

Even allowing for the fact that the vehicles were new, there was a suspicion that, on some of the midicoaches, there was no synchromesh on the lower gears.

After all the vehicles had been tested, the judges added up their respective marks and came up with the winners in each category. In some cases, there was a dead heat, so two prizes were given out. On the evening of the first day of Busworld Asia, all the prizes were awarded at a splendid gala dinner in one of the top hotels in Shanghai. Prominent people from the European and Chinese industries were invited onto the stage to open an envelope and announce the winner of each category. That raised tremendous

excitement. There was great joy and much clapping as each of the winners came up in turn to receive his or her award.

There is no doubt that Asian Coach Week is highly popular with the manufacturers and that it is playing an important role in developing the standards of products in the Chinese industry

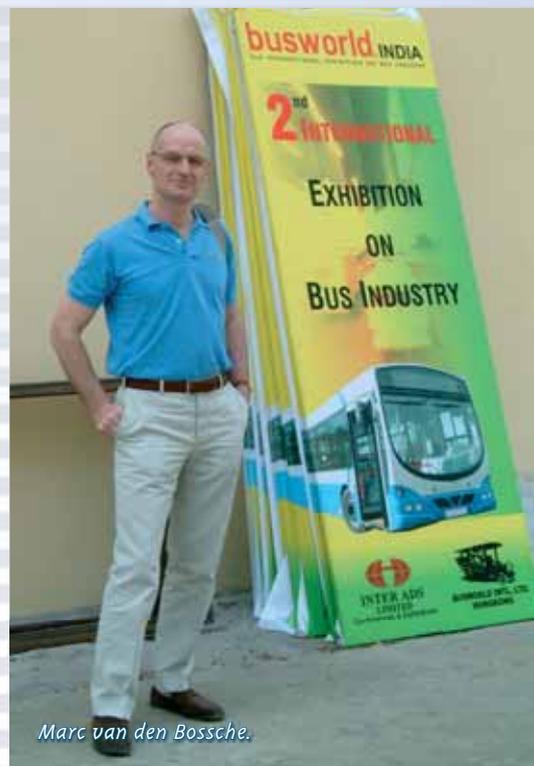


*Out on the road with the Yutong BRT vehicle.*

## NEW PRESIDENT

BAAV, which broadly translates as the Association of Bus & Coach Operators of West Flanders, the owner of the Busworld brand, has elected a new president.

He is Marc Van den Bossche. Marc, 49, has been a member of the board of BAAV for 12 years and is also the owner of a company running more than 100 buses and coaches near Aalst, North of Brussels.



*Marc van den Bossche.*

At the same time, Yves Delaere, 47, was elected Vice-President. He is a director of a company, founded by his great-grandfather in 1922, running buses between Bruges and Ghent. Yves has been a board member since 2003.

Marc succeeds Guido Vlieghe, who was President of BAAV for 12 years. It was under Guido's leadership that Busworld developed into an international brand, taking the idea of exhibitions, dedicated to bus and coach professionals, to Shanghai, India, Turkey and Nigeria. We would like to thank Guido for all his efforts and wish him well for the future.

# CHINESE FOCUS ON NIGERIA

The fifth edition of Busworld Lagos was held at the Ocean View Exhibition grounds in Lagos from 22 to 24 February. More than 2,000 professional visitors came to the exhibition, including quite a number from neighbouring West African countries. One of the strategic ambitions of the Busworld and its Nigerian partners is to make Busworld Lagos a regional event.



*Higer of China plans to open a factory to assemble buses and coaches in Nigeria.*

One of the exhibitors, the King Long Suzhou company from China, which trades as Higer, announced plans to assemble several hundred city buses and intercity coaches per annum in Nigeria in co-operation with a local partner. Another Chinese builder, Golden Dragon, showed one of their minibuses. This size of vehicle is very popular for public transport in Lagos.

Brazil has been a traditional supplier of buses and coaches to Nigeria, shipping them across the South Atlantic. Once again, Marcopolo attended, showing two city buses with high floors and ground clearance, ideal for West African conditions.

Lagos is built on a series of islands, connected by bridges and causeways. Traffic congestion can be severe. The local Government has inaugurated the Lamata project, a new type of public transport in which road, rail and waterways are integrated.

The Lagbus project is part of Lamata. The first phase will be ready later this year. Buses will run in segregated lanes, which other traffic cannot use. There will be a



*Marcopolo buses for the Lagbus project.*

major change in operating practice. Normally, buses in Nigeria depart when they are full. On the busways, they will run on regular schedules, every five minutes. Lagbus will start with 80 vehicles this year, rising to 180.

Busworld Lagos was supported by a broad mix of exhibitors, including Nissan, Mitsubishi, Pirelli, Dunlop, parts suppliers, and financial and insurance institutions.

## TEMSA GOES GLOBAL

Temsa, the rapidly expanding Turkish manufacturer, brought two coaches to Busworld Asia.

It was an important step in the company's strategy to establish itself as a global brand.

Mehmet Buldurgan, President, was delighted with the interest shown in his coaches, not only by Chinese people, but by visitors from several other countries around the world.

As an added bonus, his company's Diamond coach was joint winner of the coveted Luxurious Coach of the Year prize in the Asian Coach Week.



*Mehmet Buldurgan and Bob Lee.*

# BCI AND WUXI COLLABORATE

*The 45ft coach developed for the US market.*



If ever proof was needed of the global reach of Busworld, one of the most interesting stands was shared by BCI of Australia and Wuxi Anyuan Automobile.

BCI is an Australian company which has helped to develop a range of buses and coaches that are built by Wuxi. Boyd Denning of BCI said that all the vehicles were built with high tensile galvanised steel, shipped to China from Australia. His company

signs off all the drawings and also approves all the material used in the vehicles. In order to ensure high quality standards, many items are imported from Western Europe, including climate control systems and seats.

BCI expected to supply around 150 units to customers in Australia this year.

Another company, BCI USA, has been established by an importer in Kansas. One of the exhibits in Busworld Asia was a 13.7 metre coach, built to a North American specification. This included a completely flat floor and a rear mounted washroom at floor level. The driveline consisted of a Caterpillar C13D ITA engine, developing 410bhp, an Eaton-Fuller 10-speed automated gearbox and ZF axles.

Boyd Denning said that there were plans to ship 60 units to the United States this year, but two further

models will be added to the range, with a target to supply around 1,000 vehicles from China within the next three years.

In a third venture, two coaches on this stand had signs proclaiming, in Chinese and English, that they had been sold to Ireland. BCI is in the process of establishing a subsidiary there. One was a full size 12 metre coach and the other a 9.6 metre midicoach. Both had Cummins power and ZF fully automatic gearboxes.



*BCI has sold this midicoach to Ireland.*

## NEW CONCEPTS

At Busworld Asia, one can normally expect to see not only new models, but also completely new types of vehicles. We were not disappointed this year.



*The Yutong open top double deck bus for sightseeing.*

The vehicles on the extensive King Long stand included an airport apron bus that was 13.83 metres long and 3.0 metres wide. It was powered by a Cummins ISBe220 engine and had a front-wheel drive layout. This large bus had capacity for 140 passengers, with access doors on both sides.

Zhengzhou Yutong showed the first open-top double deck bus built in China, for city sightseeing. It had an overall length of 11.975 metres on two axles and had two staircases.



*The first bi-articulated bus built in China.*

There were 53 hard plastic seats on the upper deck and 25 downstairs. All had drain-holes in them, in case the bus was caught in a sudden downpour. The mechanical specification was advanced, with a Cummins ISLe290 Euro 3 engine, fully automatic gearbox, ZF axles, air suspension and disc brakes. Yutong

believes that there is a niche market for these vehicles in a number of Chinese cities.

The third new concept was the first bi-articulated bus in China, built to an overall length of 25 metres. It was made by Youngman and had a full low floor layout, with an MAN engine mounted vertically on the offside in the front section.

A spokesman for the company said they believed that vehicles like this were a practical alternative to light rail, at a fraction of the cost, and that they could be delivered much more quickly.

## NEWSLETTER ON LINE

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