

busworld newsletter



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BUSWORLD INDIA POSTPONED

The first Busworld India exhibition, originally due to be held in New Delhi from 23 to 25 September, has been postponed and will be held early next year from 7 to 9 March 2005.

This was principally because some exhibitors, and a substantial number of prospective visitors, had already made commitments to attend an international exhibition in Hanover, Germany, in the last ten days of September.

Rajan Sharma, Managing Director of Busworld's Indian partner, Inter Ads Limited, is a well-known specialist in conferences and exhibitions. His company already organises several of the leading trade fairs in India. At a planning meeting for Busworld India, Rajan Sharma said: "We are very pleased to be working with Busworld. We have seen how well the concept of a dedicated exhibition works in Kortrijk for bus and coach manufacturers and all the companies that provide accessories and services to the industry. We believe that India is ready for this type of exhibition, where customers and other people who make decisions about the industry can see all the latest designs and developments and talk to the people who make them.

"We have had lots of help from the very professional team at Busworld. They have been organising these specialised exhibitions for over thirty years and have shared their experiences with us. The biennial Busworld, held in the Belgian city of Kortrijk, is the most international show of its kind, anywhere in the world. Last year, people came from



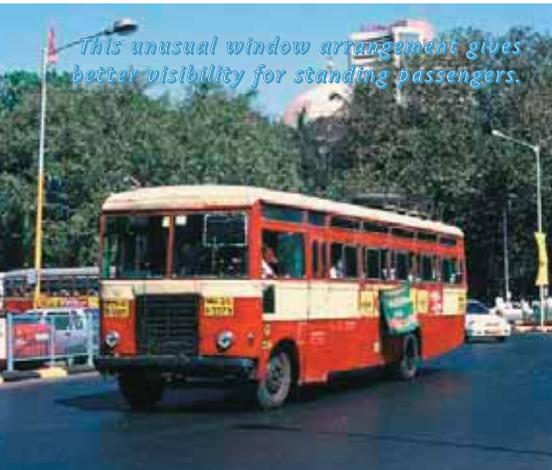
There is great demand for high capacity public transport in India.

more than 100 countries. "Taking the Busworld formula and putting it together with our own extensive experience of organising exhibitions in India makes me confident that Busworld India will be welcomed by all the professional people in the very extensive Indian bus industry. It will be a trade show, open only to visitors who either work in the industry, or in other fields that depend on buses and coaches, like tourism.

"I hope that the decision to postpone Busworld India does not inconvenience anyone. It is important that we get the timing right and avoiding a clash with Hanover will enable us to attract more international visitors.

Speaking at the same meeting, Luc Glorieux, Director of Busworld, said: "We expect Busworld India to become a regular and important event in the Busworld diary. India is





This unusual window arrangement gives better visibility for standing passengers.

one of the largest markets in the world, with around one billion people and low levels of car ownership. The Indian manufacturing industry is now building more than 25,000 larger buses and coaches each year. Putting that into perspective, it is about the same size as the whole of the Western European industry!

"I hope potential exhibitors will not stay away, even if they have nothing new to show. Long experience at Busworld Kortrijk has taught us that some of the most successful manufacturers are those who keep the same designs for several years. Coach companies are happy when their customers find it hard to distinguish between a new vehicle and one that is several years old. Those vehicles inevitably hold their value better than those of manufacturers who change their styles too frequently.

"While we are always pleased to be associated with the launch of new vehicles and accessories at Busworld exhibitions, this industry is all about people. Apart from the very important fact that the vehicles are built to carry people, whether to work or for leisure, Busworld exhibitions are a unique opportunity to meet other people in the industry and get up to date with all the latest developments.

"The companies that make accessories and provide services to the industry also make an important contribution to Busworld exhibitions. We are seeing developments in electronics and in equipment that enhances safety and comfort for drivers and passengers. Buses and

coaches already have an excellent safety record, but the manufacturing industry is always striving to make vehicles even safer."

"We already have an impressive list of exhibitors, covering a broad spectrum of the Indian industry. Rajan Sharma and his colleagues have high expectations that more companies will sign up to attend the inaugural Busworld India. Some members of the Busworld team in Kortrijk plan to visit Busworld India and are already looking forward to it."

The first Busworld India exhibition will be held in the Pragati Maidan Exhibition Halls in New Delhi.

NEW BUSWORLD HEADQUARTERS

BAAV, the trade association of bus and coach operators of west Flanders and founder of the

of the King of France in 862. When she became pregnant, the King accepted him as his son-in-law, granting him the title of the (first) Count of Flanders and giving him extensive land in the area. The ghost of the unfortunate Judith is said still to haunt the buildings. A more substantial fortification was built in the early middle ages. The present building, one of the oldest renaissance castles in Flanders, was built from 1515 to 1538. This period was notable for its distinctive architectural style. Two small transformations were made in the eighteenth century. The portal was moved to the south side of the building and the principal tower was adorned with a dome in the shape of an onion. Neither disturbed the style of the building. The Castle was owned by several families, but then lay empty for a number of years and was falling into disrepair. BAAV and Busworld had been looking for new premises for some time. When BAAV made an offer to



Busworld exhibitions, has moved into one of the most historic buildings in the Flemish region of Belgium. The Kasteel (Castle) van Rumbeke is situated in parkland on the edge of Roeselare and is a world of difference from the organisation's previous cramped offices in the town. The Castle is the third building on the site, and is very significant in Flemish history. According to legend, Badouin, Forestier of Flanders, abducted Judith, daughter

purchase the domain, there were many rumours and warnings. "Anyone who buys an uninhabited castle is mad" and "It is going to need an enormous amount of money" were the two most frequently heard. BAAV paid € 1.2 million for the Castle, two other substantial buildings, parkland and a large pond that adjoins two sides of the main building. The park and the pond were sold almost immediately to the Province of West Flanders

which already owned a substantial area of woodland adjacent to the domain. There was also revenue from the sale of the previous offices in Roeselare. BAAV was left with the Castle, a large block of run-down stables, a building at the entrance that is let as a restaurant to a leading brewery, and a small amount of land. The cost of restoration of the Castle and stable block was estimated at 1.5 million, but, because they were classified as ancient monuments, they qualified for state subsidies of up to 80%.

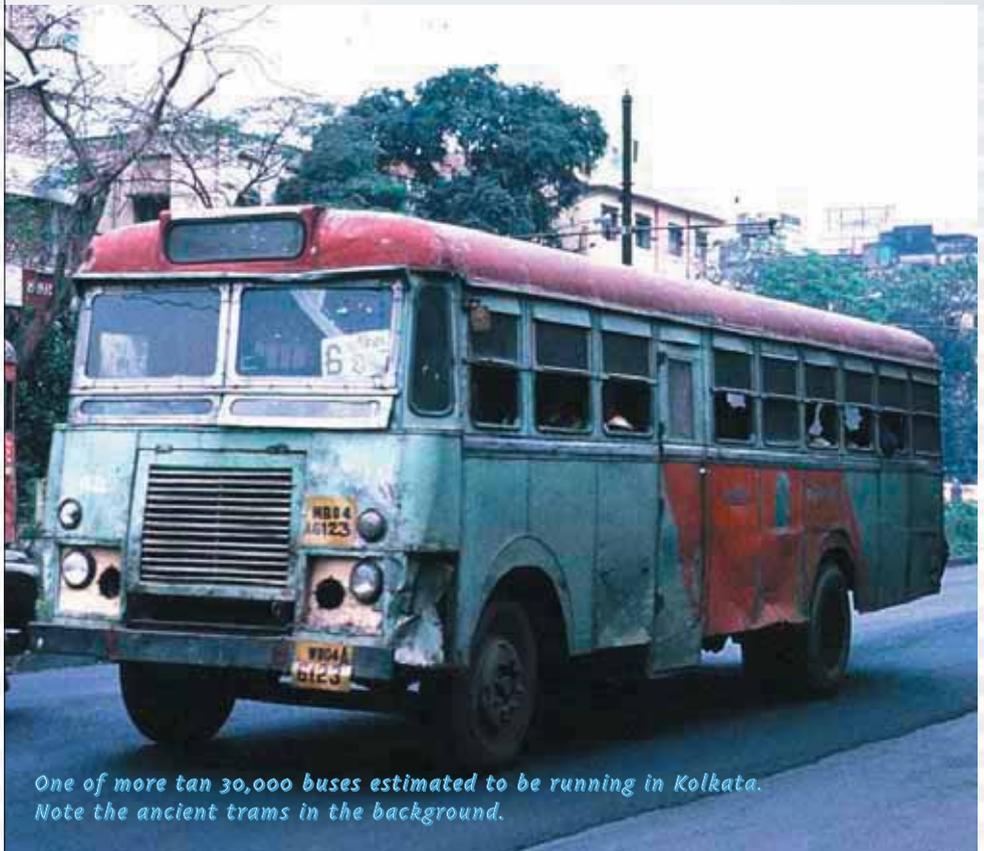
In return, the buildings must be opened to the public for up to 50 days per year. The Castle has been fully restored, including a completely new slate roof. Pennants adorn each of the towers. On the ground floor, there is a large area suitable for receptions. The first floor includes the grand hall of the knights, which will be used for concerts and exhibitions. On the second floor, there is a massive loft that will become the Museum of the History of the Counts of Flanders. It would be difficult to find any more appropriate location for it. Many of Belgium's finest craftsmen have worked on the restoration and are now busily renovating the stable block. The building that is let as a restaurant needs only relatively minor work at this stage. BAAV and Busworld benefit from spacious offices and a very pleasant working environment. Rooms are large, with high ceilings, and views across the parkland. Many original features have been well preserved, like spiral stone stairwells, massive oak beams and superb fireplaces. Having been fully restored, the cost of upkeep is very reasonable. As a historic building, it will be subsidised up to 62.5%, and there will be income from functions. The Castle looks splendid, but the final cost is less than would have been needed to build conventional new offices for BAAV and Busworld. It is also a win-win situation for the Province of West Flanders, because the Castle is occupied and in safe hands. It will give an important boost to tourism in the region, which is, after all, a vocation of Busworld. Coach tourism and history are always mutually compatible – each serves the other

HALF A MILLION BUSES

India is one of the largest markets in the world for buses and coaches. There are estimated to be over half a million in circulation in the sub-

continent. There are concerns about the lack of structural standards with many of these smaller builders, and some form of regulation could be

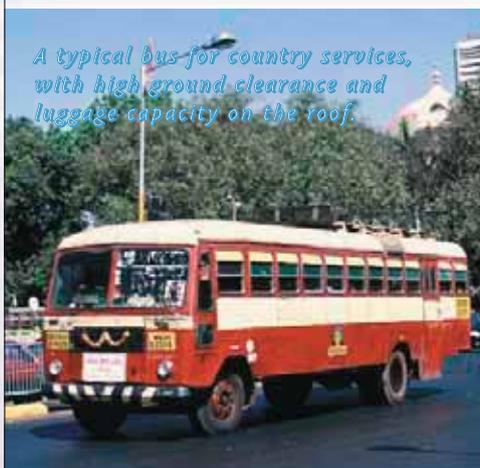
scattered throughout the sub-continent. There are concerns about the lack of structural standards with many of these smaller builders, and some form of regulation could be



One of more than 30,000 buses estimated to be running in Kolkata. Note the ancient trams in the background.

continent. A very large number of them have high, simple, truck-derived chassis, usually with front-mounted engines. Ashok Leyland and Tata Motors dominate chassis production. There are some large and well-established bodybuilders, but also many small concerns,

introduced. The lack of standards among some of the smaller builders also means that bodies deteriorate rapidly. Many chassis are rebodied in mid life and can give up to 20 years service, especially in rural areas. There is a very wide mix of owners. The State Road Transport Undertakings operate large fleets, all over India. The major cities have their own extensive fleets but there are also large numbers of private operators, often running in competition with the public sector. A report in 2002 estimated that there were around 41,000 buses running in Delhi, 35,000 in Bangalore, and 31,000 in Kolkata.



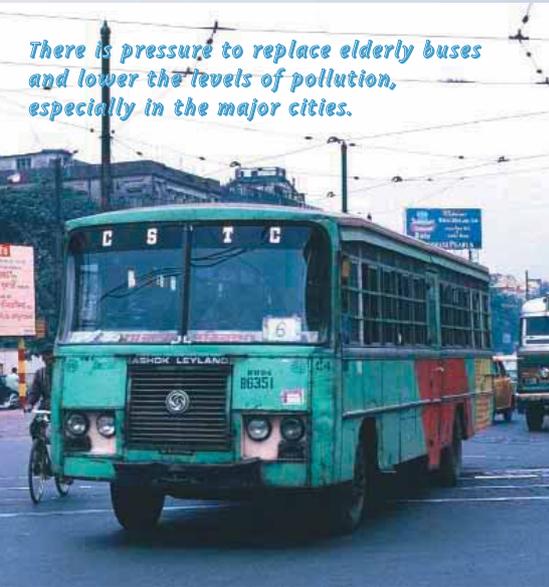
A typical bus for country services, with high ground clearance and luggage capacity on the roof.

By any standards, those are massive figures and demonstrate the ability to move enormous numbers of people daily. There are also estimated to be 13,000 in Mumbai, 12,000 in Hyderabad and 5,000 in Chennai.

REDUCING POLLUTION

India is taking major measures to reduce the levels of emissions from buses. The biggest improvement has been achieved in New Delhi, with

There is pressure to replace elderly buses and lower the levels of pollution, especially in the major cities.



heavy investment in buses running on compressed natural gas, including retrofitting CNG engines into older vehicles. It all started in 1998 when a pressure group took action against the State Government of Delhi over severe air pollution.

It eventually reached the Supreme Court which ordered all old buses to be taken out of service and those that were less than eight years old

to be capable of running on CNG. Fortunately, India's two main bus manufacturers could supply CNG engines and won huge contracts for the supply of engines and new vehicles.

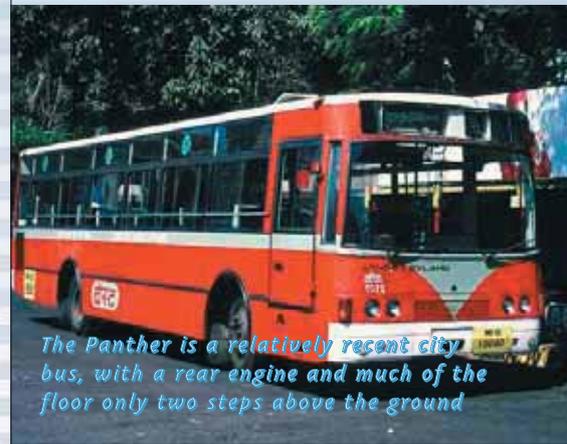
The transformation was helped by the State Government providing the expensive gas refuelling facilities. It is very unlikely that there has ever been such a rapid and large scale replacement of diesel buses by CNG models anywhere else in the world. Subsequently, BEST, the principal operator in Mumbai, was ordered to phase out more than 700 buses that were over fifteen years old and to replace them with Euro 2 or CNG-fuelled vehicles. BEST will buy at least 100 CNG buses per annum over a six year period and will retrofit many older vehicles with Euro 2 engines. The manufacturing industry can provide diesel engines that meet the latest European standards but has protested that fuel currently available in India has too high a sulphur content and therefore prevents the latest generation of engines from operating at maximum efficiency and minimising emissions.

The oil companies will have to come into the equation, because the Government has decreed that buses first registered in India's eleven largest cities must comply with Euro 3 emission standards from 2005 and they will become mandatory for the whole of India from 2010.

LOWER FLOORS FOR CITY BUSES

The Indian authorities are keen to introduce low floor buses because they are more passenger-friendly. This will not be easy, because many roads are not suitable for the latest low floor technology and designs. One solution in New Delhi has been to plan a number of Bus Rapid Transit routes with a total length of around 90km.

It will be the first scheme of its kind in India and should reduce journey times by more than half. Buses will run in their own dedicated lanes,



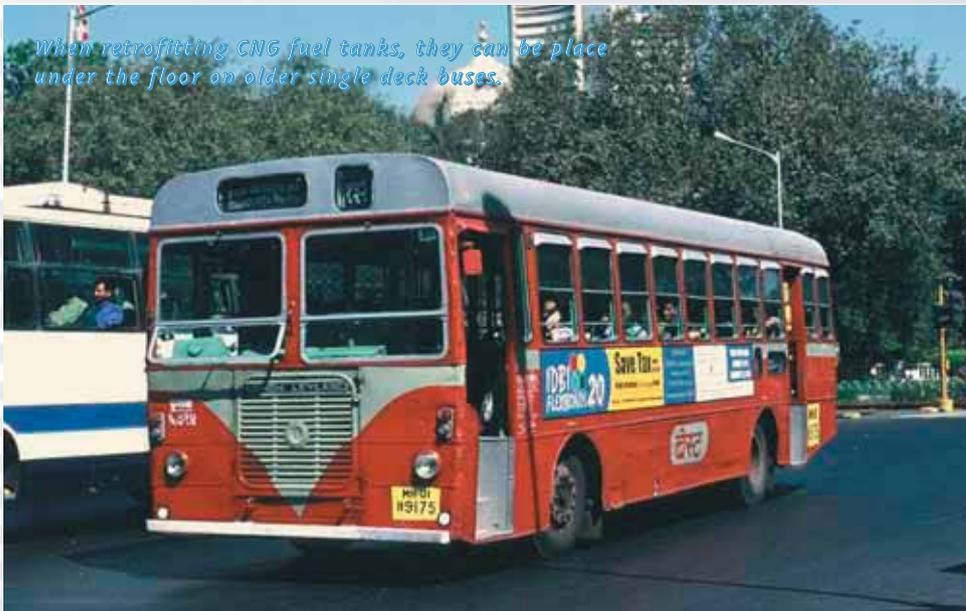
The Panther is a relatively recent city bus, with a rear engine and much of the floor only two steps above the ground

separated from other traffic, and with other benefits like priority at junctions. This ambitious scheme will require planning consent and a considerable amount of reconstruction of roads and pavements, also relocation of some public services like electricity and telephone cables. It is therefore likely to be introduced over a number of years.

Prototype low floor buses have been developed by Ashok Leyland, Sulej Motors and Tata Motors. Vehicles for the New Delhi BRT system will be technically more advanced than current Indian designs.

The combination of low floor height and gas tanks at roof level will require monocoque construction. Based on experience in other parts of the world, there is often widespread political and public pressure for the large scale introduction of more accessible buses. They do not just benefit the

When retrofitting CNG fuel tanks, they can be placed under the floor on older single deck buses.



disabled. All passengers can get on and off more easily, leading to faster journey times. The challenge for manufacturers is to achieve lower floor heights while still using components that are readily available in India. That might mean that low entry vehicles, with a low floor in the front part of the vehicle and a conventional rear axle, become more popular for most services.

MANUFACTURERS PROSPERING

The Indian financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March. Production of bus and coach chassis of 7.5



Ashok Leyland is one of the two major manufacturers in India.

tonnes gross and above rose from 21,156, in the twelve months to the end of March 2003, to 27,616 in the similar period to the end of March 2004. That was a rise of just over 30%. Similarly, sales in the same periods rose from 19,970 to 24,643, a rise of 26%.

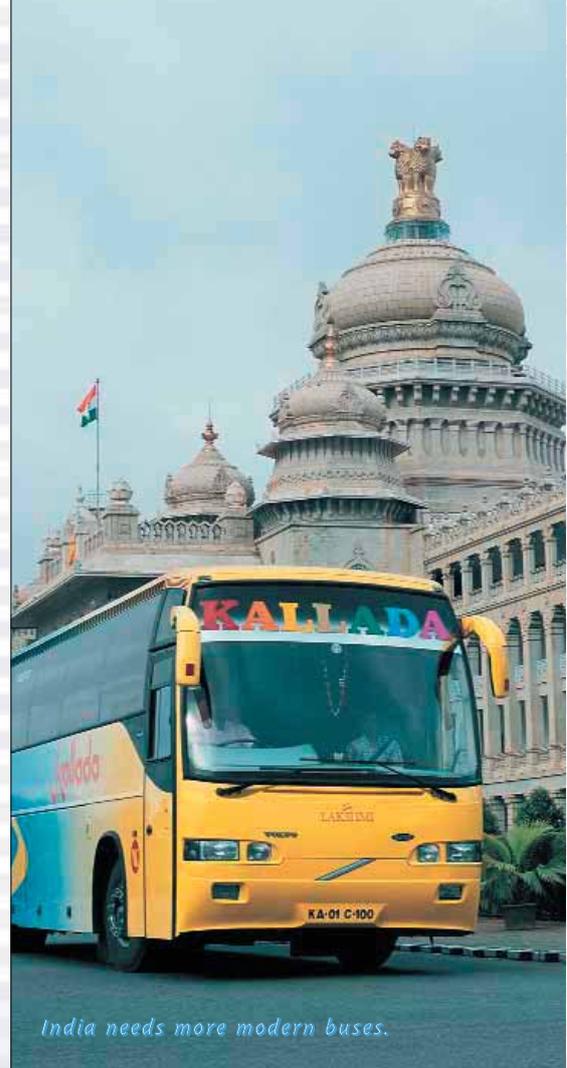
The balance of production went for export. In the twelve months to the end of March 2004, Tata Motors built 13,507 units, just ahead of Ashok Leyland with 12,996. Tata was further ahead on sales, at 12,488 units, compared with Ashok's 11,082, because of the latter's strong export deliveries.

In the sector for small buses up to 7.5 tonnes gross, production rose from 19,821 in the twelve months to the end of March 2003 to 20,993 in the period to the end of March 2004. Sales were also up, from 18,417 to 19,108. Indian manufacturers are active in a number of export markets. Their vehicles are regularly supplied to neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

Indian built buses have also been supplied recently to Afghanistan and Iraq. The Gulf States, several African countries, Mauritius and the Seychelles also regularly buy buses from India.



The other is Tata Motors



India needs more modern buses.

JOINT VENTURES IN INDIA

A number of interesting joint ventures have been established in recent years in the bus and coach industry in India. In January 2001, JCBL signed a technology transfer agreement with the Xiamen King Long United Automotive Co of China to build a range of luxury integral coaches from 7.3 to 11.3 metres long for the Indian market. In March 2001, Irizar, the leading Spanish coach builder, formed Irizar TVS, a joint venture with Ashok Leyland and Sundaram Industries, to design and build interurban bus bodies. They are constructed in Sundaram factories to Irizar designs. In 2000, Volvo Bus Corporation decided to assemble its B7R coach chassis in a factory already established by Volvo Truck Corporation in Bangalore.

An agreement was signed with Jaico Automobile Engineering, part of the Azad Group of Bangalore, to design and build intercity and tourist coaches. Indian manufacturers have also signed a number of agreements in recent years to acquire the latest technology in engines, gearboxes and axles.

HIGHWAY EXPANSION

The National Highways Authority of India was set up in 1995 to improve the sub-continent's road network. In 2000, construction started on the "Golden Quadrangle", a network of 5,952km of highways linking Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Mumbai. The high capacity highways, with four lanes in each direction, are due to be completed by the end of this year.

Further north-south and east-west corridors will then be constructed. The opening of the highway network will greatly boost demand for luxury coaches, for touring and express services. Coaches are also used on commuter routes serving the major cities. Coach specifications are forecast to become more sophisticated and comfortable. Mechanically, higher engine power outputs and air suspension will become the norm.

Passengers will also expect features like reclining seats, air conditioning and in-coach entertainment systems. Tourist coaches will have to be built to greater overall heights, in order to provide sufficient under floor luggage capacity.

DOUBLE DECK ORDERS

Double deck buses have traditionally been operated in Kolkata and Mumbai. They are built by Ashok Leyland, with a front mounted engine. BEST, the principal operator in Mumbai, wanted to withdraw its remaining double deck buses because of the higher operating costs with two-man crews. Regular passengers objected to this decision, because the double deckers had higher capacity. Following strong protests, BEST reversed its decision and placed orders for 100 new double deckers for delivery in each of 2004 and 2005.

POWER STEERING

Currently, power assisted steering is an optional feature on many Indian buses and coaches (and heavy trucks).

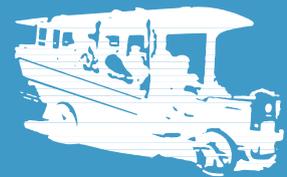


A double-deck bus in Mumbai.

The Indian Government passed a law earlier this year making power steering a mandatory requirement on all commercial vehicles built in India from December 2004 onwards. Power assisted steering not only requires much less effort from the driver, but also reduces the number of times the steering wheel has to be turned from full lock on one side to full lock on the other. It is an important safety feature.

CRUSH LOAD TRANSPORT

According to a recent article in "Urban Transport International" about transport in India's major cities, the rail operator in Mumbai is looking for carriages to carry 16 passengers per square metre, the current peak-hour load on local trains.



NEW ADDRESS

**BUSWORLD
HEADQUARTERS**

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NEXT

**BUSWORLD
INDIA**

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