

Sumitomo Rubber unveils R970m tyre production facility

Sumitomo Rubber South Africa (SRSA), a manufacturer of the Dunlop, Sumitomo and Falken tyre brands, officially launched its Truck and Bus Radial (TBR) factory in Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal.

This second phase of SRSA's multi-billion-rand investment to upgrade and modernise the plant's capacity saw a further injection of R970m (US\$67.7m) to introduce and manufacture truck and bus tyres locally, bringing the total investment into the Ladysmith facility since 2014 to more than R2bn (US\$136m).

VIP guests, stakeholders and dignitaries were given an opportunity to tour the TBR factory. They included government and industry representatives together with president and CEO of Sumitomo Rubber Industries, Ikuji Ikeda, who delivered an address and unveiled a plaque to mark the opening of the facility.



Ikeda said, "Sumitomo Rubber South Africa has been a part of Sumitomo Rubber Industries group company from December 2013 and from then we have worked together to step ahead in various areas of the business, such as safety, Passenger Car Radial tyre production, quality, products, sales channel and people. This marks the first time Sumitomo Rubber Industries has established a Truck and Bus Radial factory outside of Asia."

Ikeda said the reasons for proceeding with the investment – despite the challenges of developing a TBR factory from scratch – included the African market’s potential and particularly the Free Trade Agreement which would support SRI’s business initiatives. He added that local TBR tyre production would result in the expansion of business for truck and bus vehicle manufacturers and present opportunities for government-related businesses.



Riaz Haffjee, CEO of SRSA, outlined the vision and purpose of the TBR facility and the range on offer. “We will be industrialising a total of 24 sizes between our Dunlop and Sumitomo brands, from this year until September 2019,” he said.

Haffjee also elaborated on the community impact that the investment and development of the factory has had.

“Following SRSA’s first phase factory investment in 2014 which saw us increase our output of high-quality passenger and sport utility vehicle (SUV) tyres at this plant, the new TBR factory has created growth and a brighter future for the local community. SRSA’s total investment in employment, utilities and procurement has doubled since 2014, which has had a direct impact on the town and has served as a catalyst for community development and entrepreneurship.”

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