



New plant in the emirate Ras Al Khaimah:

The first Ashok Leyland buses are coated in the paint shop which was set up with the help of BASF Coatings.

Successful initiative

How a business partnership can come about from a newspaper announcement.

The go-ahead was given in January of this year: Ashok Leyland, India's second largest commercial vehicle manufacturer, started production in a newly constructed factory in the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates. Buses roll off the assembly line here and, when working to capacity, this facility can produce around 2,000 units per year. This was also a special moment for BASF Coatings. As a close partner, the coatings producer developed the coatings for the buses and supported Ashok Leyland in setting up the painting facility and coating processes. BASF supplies a two-component system of the Salcomix brand, which is used in the new bus factory for the entire range of models currently being produced there.

"We didn't hesitate"

Flashback: In 2007, a newspaper announcement caught the attention of BASF Coatings in Dubai. It announced Ashok Leyland's intentions to set up its own bus production facility in Dubai. "We didn't hesitate for a second," recalls Dave Jerrison, Business Developer of BASF Coatings in

Dubai, "and contacted the Board of Trade there immediately."

Backed by the positive acknowledgment of this announcement, BASF Coatings established contact with Ashok Leyland at an early stage – an initiative that received positive feedback. "We were already on the lookout for a professional and reliable coating partner," says K. M. Mandanna, Vice President of Manufacturing at Ashok Leyland. "At the time we were convinced by the fact that BASF Coatings is present in Dubai, can supply us from local warehouses and provide us with customer service at all times." Accordingly, the coatings producer was also immediately at hand when it came to designing and installing the process technology after the shell of the factory building had been constructed.

This was the start of what was to become a close working partnership. "It is almost as if we set up this plant together," says Jerrison, summing up the months that followed until last fall when the first test coatings were ready to be carried out. The decision was made in favor of a complete Salcomix system consisting of an epoxy primer and a PU

topcoat. Following the approval by Ashok Leyland, the coating system was incorporated into the production process now to be implemented as well as into the training of the vehicle manufacturer's spray painters. Also in this phase, the close proximity to the customer proved highly useful, which BASF Coatings can ensure by having its own technical department in Dubai – which in turn is closely linked to the laboratories and technicians at the corporate headquarters in Münster, Germany.

In setting up the plant near Dubai, Ashok Leyland has equipped itself for the future. The strategic objective is to be able to meet the growing demand for urban buses and touring coaches in the Middle East with a corresponding offering and to expand the portfolio to include the luxury bus segment. The factory's capacity is designed with this strategy in mind, as is the state-of-the-art production and process technology, thus providing the basis that allows Ashok Leyland and its new main coatings supplier BASF Coatings to have a positive outlook despite the current economic crisis. ■

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