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DRIVING THE MAHINDRA FURIO

A brief drive of the Mahindra Furio 12 provided a good insight into of how modern trucks are re-arranging the equation of profit and productivity.

— Bhushan Mhapralkar —

It is cloudy and about to rain. The rains this year have been intense and ravaging. A result of climate change perhaps, they have caused floods in many different regions of the country. They have had a chilling effect on many businesses. Many transporters have seen their assets suffer and their operations get adversely affected. Past Panvel, and out on the Mumbai-Goa highway, the traffic is scarce. The recently four-laned stretch leading out of a triangular junction (where one road goes to Pune, and two others to Nhava Sheva port and Goa respectively) is providing the new Mahindra Furio 12 (with a cargo body) enough opportunity to reveal itself. Doing good speeds, it drives past Shirdhon village to hit the rain-ravaged section of Karnala Bird Sanctuary. Taking all that is thrown at it - from potholes, uneven surfaces, rough patches, and patches where the road seems to

have simply got washed away in the rains, the truck provides no reason to worry. Quite unlike the slow pace of the CV industry, it continues to drive well.

Unveiled by Mahindra at its Chakan (Pune) plant last year at roughly the same time of the year, the Furio continues to make good progress. Drawing a crowd at its unveiling because of its smart looks, the Furio to this day seems to have retained its smart looks, and despite the arrival of new, competent products in its category. A result of the Italian designers at Pininfarina visiting the mega agricultural market (APMC Vashi) at Navi Mumbai among other places at earthly hours (dressed formally and much to the surprise of the people at the market) to understand the needs of the operators in the category; the Furio is proving to be an interesting truck to drive. Packing a good deal



Photos by: Ashish Bhatia



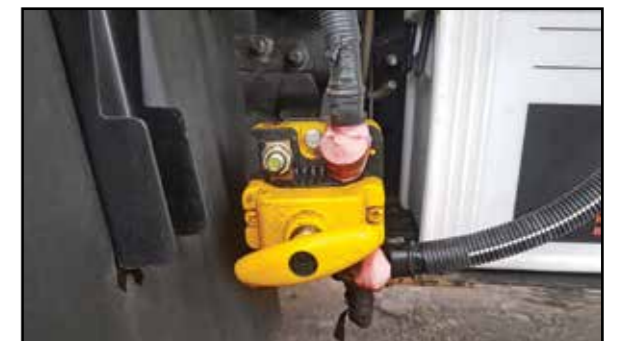
for the driver and the operator, it is extending a pleasant feeling. Enough to remind of how Italian designers and Mahindra Truck & Bus engineers has worked together to arrive at a CV platform that is not just pleasant but also competent. If the twin-beam clear lens headlamps, the chrome-slat grille and a well-sculpted bumper with fog lamps arranged at the corners in black nacelles hint at a distinct European design touch, the truck flaunts good fit and finish. Continuing to impress with its refined nature and comfort even on the rain ravaged stretch of Karnala, the Furio, with the windows half-open, and the blower is doing a good job of channelling air towards the occupants does not lose its pleasant demeanour. Interestingly, of the six vents on the dash truck, two are designed to channel air to the face of the driver, and the other two to direct cool air to the driver's feet.

Providing an impression of being well-designed and well-engineered, the cabin of

the Furio is devoid of any 'hollow' or 'basic' feel. A clever design element is the reduction in the rake angle of the A-pillars. It generates extraordinary (walk-through) space inside the cabin. Save for the larger dia. the steering wheel and its angle of rake, the Furio is providing a car-like feel. Contributing to the car-like ambiance and comfort are the look of the dash, the door panels, the overhead storage bins, and the seats. Though lacking the shape of a car seats, the seats (two-way adjustable) of the Furio are comfy and supportive. The best part about the cabin is its sealing. It is not letting much noise from outside to seep inside. While it would be simply illogical to expect a truck with a dandy ladder frame and parabolic leaf spring suspension to deliver a car-like ride quality, the ride quality of Furio is good. Enabling easy conversation even with the blower on, and the windows lowered to the half-way mark, the truck is feeling quite refined.



The 8.5R 20-inch dia. wheels contribute to the load carrying capability of the truck, and stability as well as manoeuvrability.





Flaunting good fit and finish, the Furio is ergonomically well-engineered and has some clever touches in terms of comfort, refinement, performance and efficiency

Partially loaded, it is making a positive impression. As an ICV that would appeal to a range of duties (this one will carry lighting equipment to film shooting locations and studios), the Furio is offering an unmistakable sense of comfort and ease of driving. Reflecting the changes trucks are being subjected to, and regulatory and market driven, the Furio is communicating well with the driver. It is flashing a green rpm indicator

on the instrument panel. Any deviation from the economy range (marked in green on the tachometer as well), and the indicator turns orange. It amounts to a thoughtful touch in terms of productivity gains. If the placement of parking lever in a compartment besides the driver's seat also amounts to a thoughtful touch, it was used at the beginning of this drive. The turn of the key saw a wide array of lamps light up across a modern instrument panel.

An LCD screen also came to life, conveying the vitals, including the 10-bar brake air pressure. As the 140 hp 3.5-litre four-cylinder (1800 bar pressure) common rail diesel engine woke up, the dials aptly indicated the same. Not much noise made it into the cabin. Not much noise was reported by those standing in the vicinity. Wonder if it has to do with Bosch's technological expertise, and especially in the area of pilot injection strategy, the Furio is

continuing to feeling quite refined even on the move. With good shift quality to boast of the truck is easily cruising at speeds in the region of 50 kmph and 80 kmph. The first ratio of the six-speed manual gearbox making for a strong start, the second and third ratios helped gain momentum. The fourth ratio helped to achieve good progress. The fifth and six cogs came handy when an opportunity to do good speeds presented itself.



The 140 hp, 3.5-litre turbo-diesel engine supports good performance, drive-ability and productivity.

The two top ratios have been designed to strike a good combination of speed and efficiency, it was soon clear. If the light clutch action added to the ease of driving the Furio, the placement of the controls indicated that it was ergonomically well-sorted. Adding to the ease of driving the truck, the ability of the steering to be adjusted for rake was appreciated. The Furio surprised with its capability to manoeuvre. Taking the winding stretches of Karnala ghat section in its stride, the truck felt modern and capable. The large front windshield, rear view mirrors, and windows that taper down to provide a superior nearside view, proved to be of much help. Surprising with its compact turning radius when it was time to head back, the Furio, with a wheelbase of 4500 mm and a GVW of 12-tonnes made a positive impact.

Riding on 8.25R 20-inch dia. wheels and flaunting a load body measuring 20 ft. in length, the Furio 12 provided a good glimpse of how trucks are changing. It provided an insight into

the involvement of technology in dialing better performance, efficiency, reliability, safety, and comfort. In operator terms, it would translate into lower TCO and higher profit. Extending distinctive modern looks, the Furio impressed with its ability to convey in no uncertain terms how trucks in India are evolving. indeed. If the incandescent bulb equipped tail lamps seemed to look out of place, especially when some trucks in its category are equipped with LED tail lamps, and also the big brother Blazo, the Furio stood out. Its numerous thoughtful touches with the promise of higher productivity and uptime made a mark. Supported by the Mahindra guarantee to 'Get more profit or give the truck back', the Furio 12 provided a good insight, into modern trucking; into how the new CV platform at Mahindra Truck and Bus is addressing the market requirements. Simply hoping that the BSVI version will further elevate the profit proposition highlighted by the current Furio by getting the fluid dynamics right. **CV**

