

Volvo to build local truck hub in Thailand

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Volvo will join the raft of global vehicle manufacturers planning to make Thailand its regional truck and bus production hub.

Local production of the vehicles will increase exponentially over the next two years in a bid to serve rising local and international demand, said Burint Opassetthakul, vice-president for commercial vehicles and marketing at Volvo Truck & Bus (Thailand) Co.

The company's facilities on Bang Na-Trat Road km 24 produces 1,000 trucks and buses annually.

Established in 1991, the Volvo unit will also double its number of service centres to 20 during the same period in preparation for demand rising in line with the expected higher sales.

The new service centres will also display truck and bus models with sales staff on hand.

"Volvo is perceived as a leading provider of total transportation solutions, and we now have 10 professional service centres and two independent parts dealers nationwide," said Mr Burint.

Volvo owns six of the 10 service centres and dealers the other four. There is no space to display truck and bus models.

Mr Burint said most of the new centres will be company-owned, but some will belong to the dealers.

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Volvo has two Southeast Asian facilities _ the other one is in Malaysia _ for assembling trucks and buses from imported kits.

The subsidiary is wholly owned by Swedish parent AB Volvo, one of the world's largest suppliers of commercial vehicles.

Volvo in Thailand is responsible for commercial vehicles and aftermarkets in the Philippines and Indochina as well as Thailand, while Volvo in Malaysia covers that country and Singapore.

Volvo trucks in Indonesia are now imported from Sweden.

In Thailand, Volvo has delivered 256 trucks year-to-date, up by 60% year-on-year.

First-half sales in Asia saw 6,470 trucks delivered, up by 51% year-on-year.

Volvo expects to sell 500 trucks in Thailand this year on top of 150 buses from the the Swedish manufacturer.

Bus chassis are directly supplied by Volvo to the Cherdchai Group, which then builds the bodies in Nakhon Ratchasima province.

Volvo delivered 236 trucks locally last year.

Volvo in Thailand assembles truck tractors and rigid trucks for the local and neighbouring markets.

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About 500 trucks will be shipped to the Philippines and Indochina this year.

The company will also introduce a new truck model this year, but details are not yet available.

Mr Burint said overall truck demand in Thailand is sound this year, with competition not much of a worry considering market growth of 13% year-on-year in the first seven months.

Industry sales of truck tractors and rigid trucks will exceed 10,000 units this year for the second consecutive year, growth of more than 13%, said Mr Burint.

He attributed the performance to confidence in the growing economy among entrepreneurs, a stable domestic political scene that encourages them to buy trucks and growing cross-border trade.

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