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RECORD MANIA

50,000km of non-stop high-speed running
take four Tata Motors cars to Indian, Asian
and perhaps even a world record.





“ 24 HOURS WAS JUST THE STARTING POINT AND THE CARS WERE DRIVEN NON-STOP, WITHOUT A BREAK, FOR ... WAIT FOR IT ... 50,000KM ”



PAST THE CHEQUERED FLAG TO the frenzied cheering of three dozen technicians, drivers, time keepers, marshals, officials and support staff who had made the VRDE their home for the past two and a half weeks. “Adil, you have created history”, crackled the chief time keeper over the radios. Driving the Zest and overcome by excitement and emotion Adil replied, “No, it’s we who have created history”.

Creating history

Back in 2003, the then Overdrive team led by Adil Jal Darukhanawala (the bossman as he’s fondly known) established the first Indian endurance records. Driving the Alto 800 pedal-to-metal, the team set the 24-hour record at the High Speed Track of the Vehicle Research and Development Establishment (VRDE)

in Ahmednagar, clocking 3082km and proving the quality, reliability and strength of a car that, in the years to come, went on to become the best-selling car in the nation. This FMSCI-ratified record stood for nearly 13 years as attempts to beat it have failed to get the proper sanction of the governing bodies to prove their veracity.

Now however, the record has been smashed – actually make that demolished. And it is not just the record for distance covered in 24 hours and the average speed over 24 hours – the Tata Motors team were so confident of the quality and endurance of the cars that they insisted that 24 hours be just the starting point and the cars be driven non-stop, without a break, for ... wait for it ... 50,000km. Fifty thousand kilometres, non-stop, is something unheard of in the Indian context and if all four Tata Motors cars could take the beating of continued high-speed driving at

Above: Nagbhushan Gubbi, head of engineering, Tata Motors PVBU ERC flags off the first car, the Zest, which is followed by the Bolt and the Tiago twins

the VRDE’s high-speed banking then they surely had the chops to become best sellers in the days to come.

A completely Indian effort

The event was conceived by Motorsport India’s contributing editor Adil Jal Darukhanawala along with his team at Zeegniton and was billed as the ultimate test for the Tata Zest, Tata Bolt and both the petrol and diesel variants of the brand new Tata Tiago. And the thing to note about the ‘Geared for Great’ event was that it was a completely Indian effort. The four cars mentioned have been designed, engineered and built in India and run Tata Motor’s in-house Indian engines – the 1.2 turbo-charged Revotron petrol in the Bolt and Zest, the 1.2-litre NA Revotron in the Tiago petrol and the 1.05-litre Revotorq diesel in the Tiago diesel. With the high mileage count, the cars needed to get the apt fuel and lubricant and India’s biggest oil major, Indian Oil Corporation, stepped up

to the challenge, setting up an entire refuelling bay at the venue. It was also essential to get the best quality rubber on board and that’s where JK Tyre stepped in with their new generation tyres. JK Tyre Motorsport also brought along their entire roster of racing and rally champions to handle driving duties of four cars, each clocking 50,000km. The event was also run at India’s premier testing location, the VRDE and the records were to be ratified and sanctioned by the Indian motorsport governing body, the FMSCI. An all-Indian affair then, and how!

The Geared for Great challenge also had an efficiency run which ran simultaneously to the endurance event in which the cars with similar configuration were used. The goal here was to drive as far as possible on a single tank of fuel by restricting the speed to 60kmph which is the average speed maintained by an Indian family during a highway run.

Top: The Geared for Great team is set to kick off proceedings at the VRDE. **Above:** Breaking the first 24-hour records that stood for 13 years

3082km beaten

The event kicked off on 14th March at 09:16am with Adil leading the pack in the Tata Zest followed by racing champ Armaan Ebrahim in the Bolt, the petrol-powered Tiago with our editor Sirish Chandran behind the wheel and finally Harish Samtani in the diesel Tiago; each car starting with a minute buffer between each other. Adil, Sirish and Harish (along with Hari Singh who would have his first stint in the night) were on the original records set 13 years ago, and so began the Geared for Great event.

It was quite evident from the onset that these Tata cars were going to beat the Alto's record although the question remained as to by how much. The records previously set were already tumbling away. Time, speed and distance was on the side of the Tata cars and with designated driver stints, the pit-stop time was kept to a bare minimum with the help of the quick Tata Motors crew.

The Tiago petrol's run had to be restarted owing to a time keeping glitch thereby resetting the car's run time and hence the petrol ran close to an hour and a half behind the other three.

The 3082 mark was easily covered in under 24 hours by all cars and the new benchmark of 3161km in 24 hours was established by the Bolt. The Zest and the diesel Tiago were just 35km shy of the record and just metres apart from each other as they crossed the 24-hour mark.

10,000km

Everything beyond the 24-hour mark was virgin territory for everyone in India as none had ever conceived the prospect of such an endurance event. Hence after the blistering pace set to achieve 3161km, the drivers were asked to maintain an average speed of 125-130kmph as they needed to keep the bigger picture in mind.

The Bolt charged along in the lead with the Zest running half an hour behind. The two Tiagos were a further three hours further back with the petrol variant catching up to the diesel. With Armaan Ebrahim, who recently won the FMSCI's motorsports man of the year award, going for the gauntlet, the Bolt notched up the 4000km and 5000km records and was set to capture the 10,000km one too.

As the event completed its third day, there was a sense of excitement as all three cars were nearing the five figure mark and purring away beautifully. The Bolt was driven by JK Tyre NRC racer Sameer Dhanawade when it crossed the 10,000km mark, entering the car into motoring history. It took 76 hours, 23 minutes and 23 seconds for the Bolt to hit the landmark distance, making it India's first car to be run non-stop for 10,000km.

The Zest completed the same distance half an hour later and the two Tiagos (diesel followed by petrol) followed suit a further few hours behind.

100 hours of motoring

As the event entered its fifth day, the leading Bolt was pulled in for a precautionary engine check which meant the Zest took over at the front. At around one in the afternoon, Fazal Khan driving the Zest clocked 100 non-stop hours of motoring, clocking a distance of 12,830.1km. The Zest had covered maximum ground up until that point. Abhilash P G took the Tiago petrol to the 100-hour mark, clocking 12,487km while Khyati Mody clocked 12,246km in the diesel Tiago. The Bolt clocked 12,200km in 100 hours with Sneha Sharma at the wheel.

A day later, two hours prior to the 120 hours mark, the Zest notched up the 15,000km record as well. The distance equates to roughly what an average Indian family vehicle would do in a year's time which was done in under five days by the Zest. And remember this was flat-out at the VRDE, on a track which is notorious for its bone-crushing bumps on the bankings that puts the build quality of any car to its ultimate limit.

Post another time record of 120 hours (five consecutive days), the Tiago petrol was next to cross the 15,000km mark with a time of 120 hours 52 minutes and 37 seconds, followed by the diesel Tiago which did it in a time of 122:15.05 hours. The Bolt completed 15,000km, an hour and fifteen minutes later.

Half Distance

With temperatures soaring at an all-time high in Ahmednagar, the job became a bit more strenuous on both man and machine. While the sun was blazing, it required ever more concentration and focus to keep the car in control. While kokum sherbet and lime juice were keeping body temperatures in check, the Indian Oil lubricants were helping the cars give out their best in the scorching heat. The track temperatures also were elevating and hence extra attention was given to the tyres and tyre pressures during each pit-stop.

As the VRDE's bankings were quite bumpy, severe stress was laid on the suspension components. However the cars felt so stable that all the drivers were confident enough to keep the accelerator pedal nailed and not lift off even slightly. The sustained non-stop running did take a toll on the Bolt and it was pulled in for a precautionary suspension overhaul.

Just five minutes after the eight days mark and with the bossman Adil himself behind the wheel, the Tata Zest became the first Indian car to complete 25,000km of continuous driving. To give a little perspective, it is the equivalent of doing a Kargil to Kanyakumari and back run, four times in eight days. The Tiago diesel was the next to complete the 25,000km mark, four hours later. The Tiago petrol suffered a cracked windscreen and hence lost four hours in replacing it, on account of the curing time for the sealant. Nevertheless, it made up ground and was just two hours behind its diesel sibling. It took 217 hours and 17 minutes for the Bolt to cross a quarter of a lakh kilometres.



1: Servo fuel and IOC lubricants kept all the cars ticking smoothly. **2:** The massive pit area. **3:** A quick suspension check. **4:** Adil takes Tata Motors head of design Pratap Bose for a spin round the VRDE. **5:** A pit stop underway with JK Tyre engineers checking out the rubber. **6:** Day and night the records kept tumbling. **7:** The 2003 endurance record team of Sirish, Adil, Harish Samtani and Hari Singh, re-uniting for the event



Quarter of a lakh miles

As the event progressed into its final stages, the cars were still running strong. Because all the bankings are left handers, and all are taken flat-out, the right side suspension components take a heavy beating. To be on the safe side the Tiago diesel was pulled in for a precautionary suspension strut replacement as we closed in on the finish line. But prior to that they were on course to set the 25,000 mile record.

The vehicles which made similar attempts worldwide have been a few and most of them had a much bigger motor than the ones the Tata cars were making use of. Despite that, the Zest notched up another feather in its hat by setting not only an Indian but an Asian record with a benchmark time of 322 hours and 16 minutes for the 25,000 mile mark.

The Tiago twins were next to zoom past the mark with the petrol eight and the diesel a further five hours behind. The Bolt, with all the stoppages, crossed the mark nearly a day behind. To give the team a morale boost, Tata Motors' head of design Pratap Bose dropped in at the VRDE and was passengered in the endurance cars.

Efficiency is its middle name

While these four cars were shattering the speed and time records, in the inside lane of the VRDE four Tata cars set new efficiency records. They were run non-stop, in the heat of the day and cooler temperatures of the night, within the speed range of 45-55kmph without using the air conditioner. The cars were filled to the brim and then the tanks were sealed by FMSCI

stewards. With two-hour driving stints per driver, the pit-stop time was quick with the ignition running. The cars were run till they ran out of fuel and were towed back by the safety car (a Tata Safari Storme) into the pits if stranded on the track. The tanks would then be refuelled and the fuel consumed would be recorded. The second car would then go about the following day and so on and so forth. Here our intern, Chinmay Chaudhary, also did a few stints in the Tiago diesel to help it achieve the figures that it did.

The figures achieved were astronomical. The Bolt completed 1344km using 47.45 litres of IOCL's regular petrol, which equated to an efficiency figure of 28.32kmpl. The heavier Zest petrol, with a similar powertrain as the Bolt, delivered 29.89kmpl by completing 1449.9km using 48.5 litres of IOCL's reasonably priced XtraPremium petrol. The Tiago twins, running on IOCL's regular fuels, delivered 39.1kmpl from the petrol and the most astonishing, for even Tata Motors engineers, 45.5kmpl for the diesel!

Above: The Tata Zest now holds national records for time and speed in a whole bunch of categories. **Below:** The Tata Zest ends its efficiency run after drying out its fuel tank in 1449.9km



50,000km done and dusted

Just a day prior to the big 50,000km mark, on 30th March, the Zest's fuel supply system was given a check up which took just twenty minutes. Tata Motor's head of product engineering, Dr Tim Leverton, then took to the track aiding the cars to get to the mark with a full two-and-a-half-hour stint in the Tiago petrol.

On 31st of March, after seventeen days of continuous running Adil brought the Tata Zest home, clocking a mega record for the Indian manufacturer. The time of 408 hours 50 minutes and 5 seconds is now the Indian national record for the 50,000km mark. "No car has ever done this in India's history and as I know it I don't think any other car will do it also," said Adil as he stepped out of the car.

The next car to get to the magical number was Sunny Sidhu in the Tiago petrol with a time of 414 hours 59 minutes and 21 seconds. Khyati Mody was handed the wheel for the final stint where she drove the Tiago diesel across the line in the latter hours of the day, thereby completing the run with a time of 418 hours 51 minutes and 27 seconds. The Bolt ran through the night and Abhilash P G completed the run, setting a time of 429 hours 53 minutes and 29.400 seconds.

Commenting on the run Dr Leverton said, "Our Revotron and Revotorq engines are built to endure extreme performance. We are proud to have achieved the 50,000 km milestone with our four new generation cars that have achieved many record-breaking distances. We are very happy to have completed the event and would like to congratulate all the engineers who have worked on this programme. In case of the Tiago, it is a great start and our customers can also refer to this as strong proof points of what our cars are capable of."

Clocking 50,000km was a momentous occasion and it was only fitting that the ceremonial flag-in was attended by Cyrus Mistry, Chairman of the Tata Group and Guenter Butschek, CEO and MD of Tata Motors. A final run of the VRDE was undertaken with dignitaries of all partnering companies with Cyrus Mistry being driven in the lead car by Adil.

Mayank Pareek, president, passenger vehicle business unit of Tata Motors was ecstatic at setting the national records. "We are thrilled to have successfully achieved the 50,000km milestone, this indubitably



showcases the technology and robustness of our new cars. The Geared for Great challenge offered us a tremendous platform to display our commitment to bring exciting, high-performance, category-defining cars to our customers".

The record has been ratified as an Indian record by the FMSCI and now all details have been sent to the world motorsport governing body, the FIA, as the cars have also broken the previously set world records in their respective classes. As of going to press we await the FIA's official recognition of the same. It'll be a fantastic moment for the Make In India initiative when the record is inscribed into the FIA's books as it was an Indian car which ran on an Indian track with Indian drivers at the helm that broke the world records. Made of Great? Indeed. ✘

Above: Tata Motors' top bosses came to the VRDE to congratulate the team on its mega records. Seen with Adil are Tata Sons chairman Cyrus Mistry, Tata Motors CEO and MD Guenter Butschek and head of engineering Tim Leverton



Smashing and setting new records

Over 400 records were set for speed, distance and efficiency. A summary of the important ones that have been inscribed in the national, Asian and world record books

	Tata Zest		Tata Tiago Petrol		Tata Tiago Diesel		Tata Bolt	
Dist (km)	Avg Speed (kmph)	Time Taken	Avg Speed (kmph)	Time Taken	Avg Speed (kmph)	Time Taken	Avg Speed (kmph)	Time Taken
100	138.45	43m 20.33s	134.33	44m 40.03s	141.63	42m 21.84s	147.20	40m 45.58s
500	135.98	3h 40m 37.37s	119.63	4h 10m 46.16s	129.74	3h 51m 13.78s	145.79	3h 25m 46.03s
1000	130.82	7h 38m 39.65s	120.99	8h 15m 54.87s	133.09	7h 30m 49.00s	135.59	7h 22m 29.62s
5000	131.64	37h 58m 58.14s	126.74	39h 26m 58.46s	133.01	37h 35m 32.23s	132.52	37h 43m 46.51s
10,000	129.98	76h 56m 15.14s	125.52	79h 40m 08.30s	126.47	79h 04m 19.25s	130.91	76h 23m 23.12s
25,000	126.21	198h 05m 21.45s	122.36	204h 18m 22.02s	123.54	202h 21m 18.49s	115.05	217h 17m 27.05s
50,000	122.45	408h 50m 05.00s	120.49	414h 59m 20.99s	119.37	418h 51m 26.80s	116.31	429h 53m 29.40s

	Tata Zest		Tata Tiago Petrol		Tata Tiago Diesel		Tata Bolt	
Time	Avg Speed (kmph)	Dist Covered (km)	Avg Speed (kmph)	Dist Covered (km)	Avg Speed (kmph)	Dist Covered (km)	Avg Speed (kmph)	Dist Covered (km)
1 Hr	139.5	139.5	135.2	135.2	139.5	139.5	147.9	147.9
6 Hrs	128.2	769.1	117.6	705.7	120.4	722.6	122.6	735.3
24 Hrs	130.6	3135.6	123.9	2975.1	130.8	3139.9	131.7	3161.0
50 Hrs	131.6	6579.9	127.5	6372.8	134.0	6698.2	132.7	6634.8
100 Hrs	128.3	12830.1	124.9	12487.8	122.5	12246.9	122.0	12200.5
250 Hrs	125.2	31297.8	122.2	30558.2	122.5	30625.8	115.0	28749.5
400 Hrs	122.4	48975.1	121.1	48421.5	119.3	47707.3	115.9	46350.8

Efficiency Records

Vehicle	Dist Covered (km)	Fuel Consumed (litres)	Mileage (kmpl)
Tata Zest	1449.9	48.50	29.89
Tata Bolt	1344.0	47.45	28.32
Tata Tiago Petrol	1474.1	37.70	39.10
Tata Tiago Diesel	1666.3	36.62	45.50

