



## TREADMARKS

By Rajiv Budhraja



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**E**nvironment is the flavour of the season. Even as I write this column, India's capital is engulfed in a smog bubble with the Air Quality Index being dangerously high. The need to curb automobile emissions invariably crops up during the TV debates or newspaper headlines.

While the auto industry has done a lot in the last few years to reduce its carbon footprint, the expectations from the auto ecosystem continue to be on the rise. The auto industry is increasingly facing pressure to go carbon neutral. New technological trends are transforming the automotive industry. In India, electric mobility is gaining fast acceptance. Few international players have also shown their keenness to make a foray into the Indian market. That is prompting EV automakers to hasten the product timelines and deploy major resources on R&D.

On its part, the tyre Industry is well conscious of its environmental responsibility – both as a part of the auto value chain as well as being a key manufacturing sector accounting for three percent of the manufacturing GDP of the country.

Tyres are critical to achieve overall energy efficiency in a vehicle since tyres account for 20-30 percent of a vehicle's fuel consumption. Tyre manufacturing has been undergoing significant changes so as to help reduce its environmental impact by developing products which have minimum friction and maximum fuel efficiency. Electric vehicles not only represent a change from internal combustion engine (ICE) to an EV but tyres also are an integral part of the BIG change. As the adoption of EVs is growing, the tyre industry is focused on new and improved EV tyres so as to support the shift to more sustainable mobility. There has been a significant change in design and weight of tyres in the last few years.

Being a raw material intensive product, a tyre's performance is closely linked to the raw materials used in manufacturing. Raw materials account for nearly 70 percent of the manufacturing cost of a tyre. The industry is sharply focused on taking a relook at materials to achieve sustainable manufacturing. The tyre industry firmly believes that both materials and technology needs to move in the trajectory of reducing environmental footprint. For instance, there is a slant towards using 'silica' that helps in improving tyre performance by lowering the rolling resistance and improving cut and chip resistance.

It is clear that technological influx is going to intensify in the auto sector in the years to come. The tyre industry needs to keep pace with all new technological advancements. A collaboration between the tyre industry and raw material partners, therefore, becomes increasingly important, especially in the backdrop of the concept of sustainable mobility.

A lot of research is underway for developing raw materials which are far more eco-friendly and sustainable. In this regard, ATMA Partners' Summit has come to assume an important role. The summit has carved a distinct niche for itself as being the most cherished platform for Indian tyre industry and its raw material partners to interact, ideate, discuss and jointly

work towards developing a sustainable ecosystem.

Over the years, ATMA Partners' Summit has witnessed the tyre industry and its raw material partners coming out and interacting in large numbers. This year itself, we have had two Partners' Summits focused on synthetic rubbers and reinforcement materials, respectively. Both the summits led to an in-depth understanding of issues and help draw a roadmap for benefit of the entire value chain and appropriately respond to the challenges of sustainable mobility.

The concept of a circular economy is gaining traction worldwide; India is no exception. In the case of the tyre industry, the circular economy begins with raw materials itself. For fulfilling new regulations of low rolling resistance etc., the tyre industry needs close cooperation from its raw material partners. Certainly, a tyre is more than the sum of its parts, but all the parts (raw materials) hold the key to make the sum greater. After all, it's not a zero sum game. ■

