

TOYOTA ANNOUNCES THE ARRIVAL OF SES'FIKILE 14-SEATER TAXI

Toyota South Africa has announced the introduction of a new 14-seater taxi, based on the popular Quantum commuter bus, to succeed the venerable HiAce Siyaya taxi. This new addition to the Quantum line-up fully complies with the requirements of the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme and offers higher levels of safety and comfort for taxi commuters together with better operating efficiencies for taxi owners.

The Toyota Ses'fikile 14-seater minibus taxi is a natural successor to the popular and enduring HiAce, a model that has been the backbone of the minibus taxi industry since it was first introduced in South Africa in 1969. The current version, the third generation Hi Ace was introduced in South Africa in 1983 and has been continually updated to meet customer needs since then.

Today it is estimated that some 80% of the national minibus taxi fleet is comprised of HiAce Siyaya taxis. Sadly this model cannot be adapted to the latest Taxi Recapitalisation Programme requirements.

The new Ses'fikile adopts the latest Toyota minivan and minibus technology found in the Toyota Quantum. The Quantum model, first introduced in South Africa in 2005, has already put its own unique stamp on the light commercial vehicle market in South Africa with sales of over 800 units a month. Ses'fikile is expected to add significantly to this number as it takes up the position previously held by the Siyaya in the market.

Ses'fikile offers seating for 14 occupants with the driver included, in a 2:2:3:3:4 configuration with three point seatbelts for the front two seats and two-point lap belts for all other seats. As a new generation model it offers increased safety in design and construction together with a more comfortable ride and a more relaxed atmosphere inside the vehicle. Another safety feature in Ses'fikile is ABS with Brake Assist.

Commenting on the design basics of the Quantum at the time of its launch, Kiyokatsu Miura, Chief Engineer at Toyota Development Centre 1, the division responsible for engineering the Quantum, said, "When the design objectives were laid down for the Quantum we set the bar at a very high level to achieve a design that would build on the success of the HiAce and provide a vehicle platform that would feature advanced engineering and styling that would keep the vehicle contemporary throughout its lifespan.

"From the outset excellent crash safety was an important target. Also important was the provision of the optimum amount of interior space. We had to rethink the whole impact absorbing process and come up with fresh ideas and a new structure that met out criteria for the Quantum.

"We developed new, two-layered, side members that are designed to absorb and disperse crash impact energy. We used the most advanced CAE (Computer Aided Engineering) systems to optimise this structure and the door impact beams to limit intrusions. We also developed a mechanism that helps prevent the brake booster assembly from pushing into the steering column

and the driver's footwell in the event of a severe frontal impact. In Toyota internal ODB crash tests the wide body version of the Quantum on which the Ses'fikile is based, performed better than its semi cabover competitors. Our goal of achieving top ratings in the class for safety was achieved."

One of the most important aspects of driving performance in this type of vehicle is straight-line stability. To ensure that this requirement was fully met the Quantum was the subject of an intense study of aerodynamics, body rigidity, and suspension characteristics to ensure that all of these were fully optimised. A high level of straight line stability is particularly important in that it assists in reducing driver fatigue in a vehicle that in many applications will be driven daily over longer distances.

The people-carrying role of the Quantum commuter bus and its application as a minibus taxi was carefully considered. The rear suspension and the seats have been tailored for that requirement to provide a comfortable ride on both smooth and rough roads.

Ses'fikile is powered by a latest generation Toyota 2TR-FE petrol engine. This 2,7 litres four-cylinder, 16-valve, double overhead camshaft engine has VVT-i (Variable Valve Timing – intelligent) on the intake camshaft, and a resin intake manifold that reduces induction air resistance for improved induction characteristics. S-TDI (Single Toyota Direct Ignition) and a knock control system (KCS) assist in achieving a high degree of ignition timing control.

Maximum power is 111 kW @ 4800 r/min. Peak torque is 241 Nm @ 3800 r/min. Almost 80% of this torque is available from just 1400 r/min through to over 5000 r/min.

The Taxi Recapitalisation Programme was first announced in 1999 as a programme that would result in improved minibus taxi safety specifications, improved law enforcement, and industry empowerment through new business ventures. Over an often painful gestation period, during which the programme has been continually fine tuned, the industry has arrived at a point where the scrapping of old and unroadworthy taxis in return for a scrapping allowance is a reality. With this comes an opportunity for fleet renewal with a target of 80% of the outdated minibus taxi fleet due to be scrapped by 2010.

As we enter 2008 the latest set of taxi operating and safety requirements comes into effect. The Toyota Ses'fikile enters the market with a combination of a proud heritage and latest generation technology as a worthy successor to the Siyaya and fully compliant with the requirements of the Taxi Recapitalisation Programme.

Toyota began releasing this latest generation minibus taxi to its national dealer network at the beginning of the week.

Price: R208 300 (VAT included)

Ends.

Sharon Garson,
Senior Media Relations Officer,
Toyota South Africa.
Tel (011) 809 2234
E-Mail: sgarson@tsb.toyota.co.za

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