

# Highway to circuit for Indian truck drivers

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**HOT WHEELS:** Tata Prima at the MMRT on Tuesday



**Chennai:** The Madras Motor Race Track on Wednesday looked like the set of the movie series Transformers. The giant yet sleek, brightly-coloured trucks on the racing track looked ready to transform to the ever judicious Optimus Prime and salvage the world from evil. But instead of the Optimus Prime, the Tata Prima trucks thronged the circuit and the story was not of the Transformers but rather of transformation.

It is a fairytale journey of ordinary truck drivers who have been undergoing rigorous training to be ready to race at the Buddh International Circuit on March 20 alongside professional truck racers from Europe. While Formula One in India still remains a niche sport, truck racing is something unheard of.

And thus in an initiative to familiarize the country with the sport, Tata Motors had their dealers nominate 20 best drivers from each of

their company and from some 500 odd entries top 147 racers were chosen on the basis of driving experience, average kilometers driven in a year, experience of negotiating different terrains — to name a few. The list was further brought down to 24 who were then brought to Chennai to be trained to face the world.

"The training that was devised for the drivers was all-encompassing. Most of the drivers are not financially sound — we trained them to improve their physical skills, mental agility in

addition to instilling the spirit of competition," said Vicky Chandok, former FMSCI chief, who is heading the training program for the drivers.

"The whole journey has been an overwhelming experience for all of them and I must say they have proved to be more professional than a lot of veteran drivers I have seen. When they arrived here they thought they knew all about driving trucks as they have driven on highways all these years. But when they saw what was in store for them, they were keen to learn every rule and every strategy and I must say they have progressed beyond my expectation," he added.

Motor racing is one of the most expensive sports in the world and the Indian truck drivers will go back to their profession after the event, driving trucks on the highways and travelling across states. "But we believe we will be able to ignite a dream in them which will help some of them broaden their horizons," Chandok said.