

DIMO

AUTOMOTIVE ENGINEERING – THE HEART OF SUSTAINABLE PROGRESS



MEDIA SERVICES PHOTOFILM (ESHAN SILVA)

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As Sri Lanka charts a path toward economic recovery and sustainable development, the automotive engineering sector stands as a critical enabler of national mobility, industrial continuity and technological advancement. From maintaining vital transportation solutions to enhancing industrial capabilities, this sector underpins both resilience and long-term development.

In this interview, DIMO's Chief Operating Officer – Automotive Engineering Solutions Mahesh Karunaratne shares insights on the evolving role of automotive engineering in driving national progress, and how the sector continues to adapt and lead amid changing challenges.

Q: Sri Lanka has experienced several

economic and social disruptions... what role has automotive engineering played in supporting the country's resilience and development during such phases?

A: Automotive engineering is a vital contributor to national resilience, ensuring essential services run smoothly and industries remain operational by keeping mobility and machinery functioning – even under economic pressure. From transporting goods and passengers to supporting emergency services, the sector is fundamental to national continuity.

During economic downturns such as recent import restrictions, the focus shifted to maximising the lifespan of existing vehicles and equipment. In these scenarios, deep engineering expertise became critical – not only standard after sales support but precision diagnostics and care that sustained performance.

This approach also aligns with broader sustainability goals by reducing raw material consumption and promoting a circular economy.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, this role expanded further. As the authorised distributor of Tata vehicles, DIMO enhanced uninterrupted operation of Suwa Seriya ambulances by providing essential after sales support for this critical health service.

Through its General Engineering Solutions arm, DIMO also offered free inspections to industrial clients to facilitate the safe restart of operations while fuelling dreams and aspirations of the communities.

Recognising long-term implications, DIMO invested heavily in diagnostic technologies, facility modernisation and technician training across its automotive, marine and power engineering sectors.

These efforts underscore that automotive engineering is not merely a support function – it is a strategic enabler of economic resilience, capable of sustaining national productivity even during the most challenging times.

Q: With the rise of electric vehicles (EVs), how can Sri Lanka transition toward a more efficient and sustainable mobility sector – especially from the after sales service perspective?

A: The shift to EVs is a positive development but genuine efficiency and sustainability require more than mere adoption. What ultimately determines long-term impact is how these vehicles are maintained, serviced and supported throughout their life cycle.

Electric vehicles demand a fundamentally different after sales service approach, particularly in areas such as high-voltage safety, battery diagnostics and software integration. This necessitates a parallel evolution in service infrastructure and technical capability alongside EV adoption.

Forward-thinking players are already responding. As the sole authorised distributor for Mercedes-Benz and Tata, DIMO has invested in certifications for high-voltage EV technicians while equipping workshops with specialised diagnostic tools and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) equipment.

Sales staff are also trained on electric vehicle maintenance practices to ensure customers are properly guided – from responsible charging to maximising battery life – as they are the first points of contact in the

ownership journey.

Equally critical is battery disposal. DIMO has already established responsible mechanisms to ensure used batteries are managed with minimal environmental impact.

EV readiness also involves educating the broader ecosystem. DIMO has conducted awareness programmes for stakeholders such as insurance agents and the fire services department, who are often first responders in vehicle emergencies.

For Sri Lanka to fully realise the environmental and economic value of electric vehicles, these best practices must be institutionalised through regulation, certified after sales readiness and public awareness.

Q: Remote technical support is becoming a global norm... how prepared is Sri Lanka to benefit from this shift?

A: Remote technical support is reshaping after sales care from a reactive model to a proactive, tech enabled service experience. In a landscape where speed, visibility and precision are critical, the ability to deliver real-time updates, remote diagnostics and mobile servicing is becoming the new global standard.

In Sri Lanka, while full-scale adoption is still developing, the potential for growth is considerable. The greatest value lies in minimising downtime for critical sectors such as logistics, marine operations and agriculture where even brief delays can extensively impact productivity.

Realising this potential requires strategic investments in digital infrastructure, technician upskilling and integrated service platforms that connect customers with technical teams in real time.

DIMO is already embracing this shift. As the authorised representative for MTU engines in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, we are introducing MTU Go! – a digital platform that allows customers to monitor all MTU engines and systems using IoT connectivity.

The platform provides access to diagnostics, performance metrics, service schedules and alerts on mobile devices – enabling proactive, data driven decision making and greater operational control. Remote support is the foundation of a future ready, resilient service ecosystem.

Q: Reliable after sales service is vital for agricultural machinery... so how can this access be improved to boost national agricultural productivity?



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A: Agricultural mechanisation plays a crucial role in improving productivity but its long-term impact depends on sustained performance through reliable after sales service. When service models are designed with farmers at the centre, rural economic transformation becomes achievable.

DIMO adopts a farmer first approach to after sales service for agricultural machinery. Our model emphasises accessibility and responsiveness, offering personalised, door-to-door service for owners of Mahindra tractors, LOVOL harvesters and Swaraj tractors. These proactive visits help identify maintenance needs early, reducing downtime and unnecessary costs – addressing the realities of rural operations.

We have deployed trained field technicians across the country to provide rapid service support, guided by strict benchmarks established for responding to queries and addressing service needs of all our agri-machinery brands. This standardisation enhances operational reliability for farmers.

Additionally, DIMO's annual free service campaign – open to all farmers regardless of brand – prepares thousands of tractors for the Maha season. This initiative minimises disruptions during peak cultivation and contributes to higher agricultural yields.

Expanding access to such dependable service models is essential for advancing mechanisation and strengthening the resilience of Sri Lanka's agricultural sector.

Q: How have advancements in technology sharpened technical skills and influenced training methodologies in recent years?

A: As vehicles become increasingly software driven and complex – such as those built on Mercedes-Benz Modular Architecture (MMA) – traditional hands-on training is no longer sufficient. Technical training today must be modular, digital and diagnostic focussed, promoting problem solving capabilities.

DIMO has embraced this evolution through platforms such as Mercedes-Benz Global Training Learning Space, the self-paced electronic base learning platform (ELB) that covers disciplines ranging from combustion engines to electric mobility. These tools integrate interactive features such as gamified learning and quizzes, making training more engaging and learner centric. This shift accelerates skill acquisition and enhances adaptability to rapidly evolving technologies.

Q: Skilled labour is central to after sales service... with ongoing outmigration, how can Sri Lanka secure a future ready talent pipeline?

A: The shortage of skilled technicians is one of the most critical structural issues confronting Sri Lanka's industrial and service sectors today. In after sales care where precision, speed and rapidly evolving technologies converge, building and retaining a future ready technical workforce is essential for long-term resilience.

This challenge calls for a national level commitment to creating sustainable career pathways, aligning training with global standards and restoring pride in technical professions while ensuring an improved quality of life for the workforce.

At DIMO, technician development is treated as a strategic priority. Through the DIMO Academy for Technical Skills (DATS), we deliver globally accredited vocational education, consistently feeding skilled talent into the national pipeline.

Furthermore, DIMO's initiatives such as Nana Pāura introduce school and institute level students to real world engineering environments, nurturing early interest in technical careers.

These efforts show that with structured education, continuous upskilling and industry recognition, Sri Lanka can build a talent pipeline that's ready to lead. If more private and public stakeholders adopt this integrated approach, we will not only retain talent but redefine what technical excellence means on a global scale.