

Force Gurkha RFC 2015-The home-grown E.O.V



I'm standing at the bottom a large slope waiting for something to fly over the top. In the distance I can hear the rather coarse tone of an un-muffled diesel engine getting louder and louder and then without warning, I see two giant Maxxis Bighorn Tyres emerge on the crest of the slope. They are attached to a giant red metallic monster which then bounces its way to the crest and eventually rolls down after striking a heroic pose for the camera.



In my dreams I would have very much liked this to be the Dakar Rally and the driver to be someone like Nasser Al-Athiyah but then such is life and what I got instead was something equally amazing and most importantly home-grown. The red monster was the Force Gurkha RFC, which, in essence is, a steroid-injected version of the Force Gurkha SUV.



Its birth came about when Force Motors became the title sponsor for the 2014 Rain Forest Challenge (RFC) and promptly decided that it would also enter the competition by fielding two vehicles in the fray. Needless to say, their efforts proved to be quite successful as the Extreme Off-Road Vehicle (or E.O.V as the company prefers to call it) in the hands of Tan Eng Joo and Tan Choo, dominated the competition both in 2014 and 2015.



Further, in the hands of Mervyn Lim and Hamizan Bin Abdul Hamid they also dominated the second spot on the podium both in 2014 and 2015. While 2014 was learning experience for the team, the 2015 vehicle screams 'the big boys are here to play now, so watch yourself'. So much awesomeness cannot sit behind closed doors for long and so Force decided to give the media a little preview of their 2015 title-winning RFC vehicle by having a 'track day' at their facility in Pune.



At first impression, it is huge, thanks to the massive Maxxis Bighorn tyres which are a major step up (in terms of size) from the tyres on last year's Gurkha RFC. There is an air of trophy truck thanks to the stance and design of the RFC Gurkha. The cabin is now a two-seater design with racing buckets and multiple point harnesses designed to keep the driver and navigator strapped to their seats. The centre console has been replaced by an array of switches while the stock instrument cluster has been retained in its entirety.



The front and rear suspension have been massively reworked. The front and rear get Dana 60 axles as compared to last year's Dana 44. While the suspension setup for the 2014 car was spring over axles with 12-inch gas shocks for the front and rear, this year, they have gone with a more complicated setup. The front is now a three-link setup with Pan hard and 2.5 inch Dia Dual coil over shocks with a reservoir of 14 inch travel while the rear is a four link double triangulated setup with 2.5 inch Dia Dual coil over shocks and with a reservoir of 14 inch travel.



Sounds complicated? Well, I thought so too and so discovered that the best way to convey what these changes meant to the vehicle was by giving you an idea of its increased capabilities. It can now scale a gradient with a 60-degree incline as compared to the previous RFC Gurkha's 45 degrees. The approach and departure angle have increased from 50/44 to 88/58 respectively. Finally, the water wading capability has also gone up from 1000mm to 1100mm.



Surprisingly, the brutal diesel engine noise is produced by a stock 2.2-litre four-cylinder mill that produces 140bhp/320Nm of torque and is the same one found in the Force One SUV. The package includes a five-speed manual and locking differentials to make it a fully capable off-roading vehicle. There is a noticeable whistle when the driver gets off the accelerator and there is a snorkel intake to aid with the water wading capabilities.



My colleague Ninad Ambre, who attended the 2015 RFC challenge in Goa, informed me that the degree of toughness in the challenges had gone up significantly from the previous year and so it seems that Force has taken a step in the right direction.



Since the off-road course was a bit above the level of us novices, we were given a sample of what the car was capable of in the very capable hands of Anant Gurav, deputy GM of R&D at Force Motors. The course began directly with the big daddy - a 50-degree gradient which the Gurkha demolished at a single go. We were also treated to some light water wading and various obstacles designed to showcase the Gurkha's capabilities as an extreme off-road vehicle.



At the end of the day, I walked away from the experience (or rather was driven away from it in a Force Traveller) in total awe of the vehicles that Force had shown us that day. They do not have any current plans to sell the modifications in the form of packages to customers but have not ruled out this option either.



We hope that they will consider this as we believe that the Gurkha RFC has the ability to showcase what India's burgeoning off-roading community is capable of when given a little extra (a.k.a a manufacturer's) push.

See more: <http://www.carwale.com/features/force-gurkha-rfc-2015the-homegrown-eov-19996/>