

## THAILAND: Pirelli tyres re-enter Thailand

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The Italian premium tyre brand Pirelli has named three authorised distributors as part of its strategy to penetrate the local market.

"Pirelli is ready to stage a comeback in the Thai market via a multi-distributorship strategy that will enable it to effectively reach the core target groups while touching on all customer groups," said Napasorn Suvarnpradip, country manager for Pirelli Asia Pte (Thailand).

Over the past 30 years, Pirelli, the world's fifth-largest tyre producer by sales, has had limited success in Thailand despite having had several distributors.

First was Sociata, an importer of Italian brand-name goods including Pirelli tyres. It was followed by the trading house Borneo Inchcape; the magnesium alloy wheel maker Lenso; a former distributor of Fiat, Alfa Romeo and Lancia cars Italsiam Motors; and the tyre dealer Tor Siam Commercial, the last Pirelli distributor before the brand vanished from the market two years ago.

Singapore-based Pirelli Asia has named Higher Tyre Co, run by the the second generation of the family that owns Kor Charoen Yang Yont Co, a successful distributor of multiple tyre brands. It will be responsible for Pirelli's standard tyres used on small and midsize cars and multi-purpose vehicles.

"In the initial market penetration stage, Pirelli wants to raise brand awareness among all customer groups after being absent so long from the Thai market," said Ms Napasorn.

This time around, Pirelli has appointed several distributors to handle marketing for different tyre groups based on the specific expertise of each one to reach selected groups.

Higher Tyre will market Pirelli's standard tyres to the largest group.

Kor Charoen Yang Yont will market Pirelli's ultra-high-performance tyres for super and luxury cars running at high speeds of 300 kph, such as Lamborghini, Ferrari, Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Porsche.

Central Asia International Co will also target ultra-high-performance cars plus the touring car segment.

Ms Napasorn said more distributors would be named in the future if Pirelli decided to introduce new types of tyres, such as for heavy-duty trucks.

Methee Korcharoenkiat, managing director of Higher Tyre, said Pirelli models destined for the Thai market would include Pirelli sports tyres for medium- and high-performance cars and small and midsize saloons. These tyres offer excellent grip on dry and wet surfaces, with fine grooves cut into the tread to provide better traction.

Eighty Kor Charoen Yang Yont dealers, mostly in Bangkok and the surrounding provinces, have been appointed as Pirelli dealers. Another 80, mostly upcountry, will be named by year-end.

Mr Methee said Higher Tyre has targeted sales of 10,000 Pirelli tyres this year.

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