



German carmakers failing to catch Japan in Asean



Wherever it sells cars, Germany's Volkswagen Group normally seeks at least 15% market share. But in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations with its 10 countries and fast-growing population of 650 million VW's share remains very close to 0%.

While fellow German automakers Mercedes-Benz and BMW have managed to increase their ASEAN footprints in the premium segment, the Germans have effectively surrendered the low and mid market segments to the Japanese.

Of the 3.07 million vehicles sold in ASEAN in 2015, Japanese branded units accounted for 85% with U.S., South Korean and local brands such as Malaysia's Proton making up most of the rest, according to Jessada Thongpak, a Bangkok-based ASEAN auto analyst with market researcher IHS Automotive.

By contrast, five of the 10 best-selling cars in China in 2015 were produced by Volkswagen, according to the company's own figures.

"VW was very present in ASEAN before the 1997 Asian financial crisis, but they have since allowed the Japanese to secure almost insurmountable dominance because they always found a rationale to set up another five plants in China rather than one in Thailand," said Uli Kaiser, business development director at SWS Motors, a supplier of automotive parts and components in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand.

"Now they are standing there empty-handed, which could not have possibly been part of the executive board's master plan," he added.

Kaiser, who also is the CEO of the Thailand and Indonesia AutoBooks, the Who's Who of those countries' auto sectors, believes that VW made a big strategic mistake by dragging its feet on ASEAN.

Star Pipe acquires Jensen International

Star Pipe Products, Houston has acquired the assets of Jensen International Coffeyville, Kansas and its subsidiary Jencast, located in South Coffeyville, Oklahoma.

Jensen International provides casting, machining, metal fabrication, assembly and production of customized cast iron and ductile iron products.

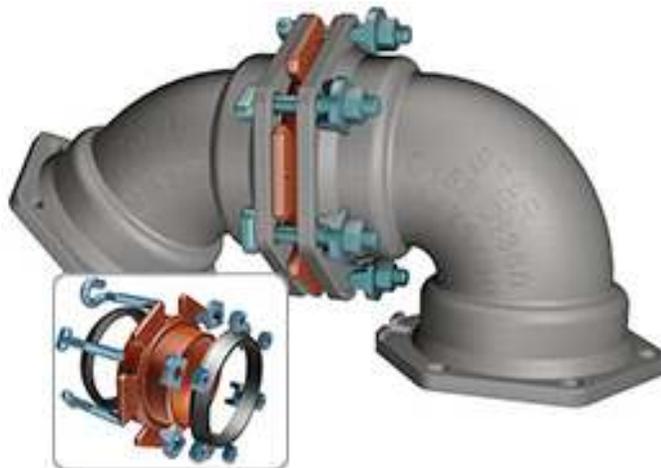
The acquisition will allow Star Pipe to continue the operation of manufacturing domestically made cast iron and ductile iron products in South Coffeyville. The company intends to expand the existing facility in Oklahoma and install new and updated equipment.

"Today's announcement is great news for South Coffeyville and northeastern Oklahoma and represents the kind of high-quality, good-paying jobs we are working to bring to the state," Oklahoma governor Mary Fallin said. "We appreciate Star Pipe Products' investment in Oklahoma and are excited they are retaining all 88 jobs, as well as create an additional 260 jobs that will require an addition being built to the existing facility. Today's announcement is another great example that our pro-growth, pro-business policies are working and are making Oklahoma an even better place to do business."

Dan McCutcheon, president, Star Pipe Products, said "We are proud to own and operate our first foundry in the United States, and look forward to expanding our workforce in northeastern Oklahoma."

"This project represents a substantial component of our long-term growth plan, and we are excited to start making it a reality," McCutcheon said. "We want to thank the state of Oklahoma, the town of South Coffeyville, Nowata County, and the Cherokee Nation for their assistance in making this project happen."

"The Cherokee Nation is dedicated to partnering with state and local governments to bring industry, jobs and economic



development to northeast Oklahoma," said Bill John Baker, Principal Chief. "Star Pipe will infuse South Coffeyville and all of Nowata County with critical payroll and infrastructure dollars. That will improve the lives of area families for years to come. Cherokee Nation is proud to play our role in ensuring a talented workforce is recruited, trained and prepared to fulfill the employment opportunities created by Star Pipe."

The South Coffeyville acquisition is expected to begin operation immediately. The company will retain the current workforce and expects to create approximately 260 new jobs over the next five years. The direct investment is expected to be in excess of \$40 million.

"I am excited to extend a big welcome to Star Pipe for choosing to move their facility to our community. This is a great opportunity for our town and Nowata County to maintain our growth," said Jim Wilhelms, mayor, South Coffeyville.

"Today we are taking another significant step towards continuing our economic development. This project will both save existing jobs and generate new jobs, helping to create new economic opportunities for residents in our county. I am looking forward to the work still before us and watching the project move forward in the months ahead. I would like to thank all the community development team, the town, county and state officials that helped make this venture a success."

This section is a compilation from various company press releases, business dailies & trade publications