

“We have developed and supplied Test Equipment to IAF”

Puneet Kaura, Executive Director, Samtel Avionics Limited, on how the company has moved forward.

Samtel has already made a name in displays. Do you see yourself moving to other avenues as well?

We have already moved forward from being a display manufacturing company – one of the driving reasons for us changing our name to Samtel Avionics. We have a very strong division in opto-electronics, where there is a lot of traction via our JV with Thales. We are also developing competency in defence electronics – which is going to be a major focus area in the coming few years. BTP (Built-to-Print) activities will also drive our business into the future. We have also developed and supplied Automated Test Equipment (ATEs) to IAF, and as there is a huge demand in this domain, we are building capabilities in this as well.

Do you see the prospects of Samtel-HAL JV replicating the Su-30 cockpit displays for other platforms that HAL manufactures?

The mandate of the Samtel HAL JV, when it was formed, was to address the avionics requirements including Test Benches and Systems for all HAL star platforms -- both fixed and rotary wing. While about 95 sets of MFDs have been delivered for induction on Su-30 MKIs, and are already flying, we have constantly been working to develop products for other HAL Star programmes. In many of these programmes, the discussions are at an advanced stage, and for a few we have already been declared L1. Very soon, we should see these opportunities materialising.

How do you see your JV with Thales growing in the coming few years?

Samtel Thales Avionics – the JV between Samtel and Thales was formed with an intention to bring Thales' technological expertise to India through Thales' multi-domestic strategy of partnering with leading industry players across the world. Currently, we are in

deep discussions with Thales on multiple opportunities that will help them establish their base in India. We are in very advanced stages of working together on some major opportunities in India. While details cannot be divulged at this time, I can only say that it will push Samtel in a completely different league from what we have been known for till now.

Has there been any progress with regard to JVs, MoUs and contracts you were working on in the last one year?

Yes, there has been a very interesting and fast-paced development in a new domain altogether. We have signed an agreement with General Dynamics, Canada for co-production of products for ground displays for military/non-military markets. This includes displays for armoured vehicles, fleet vehicles and commercial vehicles. While this partnership will help General Dynamics Canada to expand its access in Indian market, it will enable Samtel to become a strategic supply chain partner for GDC's global market. It will be a major game-changer for Samtel and will put us actively in a segment very different from the aerospace business that we have gained expertise in till now.

What's been the result of your arrangement with Honeywell in the last one year and how has it contributed in returns?

Avionics Equipment for Honeywell, meant for aircraft in the US, have been designed and developed by Samtel Avionics. Last year, we received an order valued at \$5.1 million for this equipment, and these displays have been in serial production for many months with the supplies going regularly to Honeywell Penang for integration. Samtel and Honeywell have signed a long term contract for supply of this component to Honeywell. In the last one year, the production facility for these avionics equipment for Hon-



eywell has been relocated and put into commission. The facility has been ramped up to full projection, and is expected to run for next two years, while we are talking to Bendix/King – a unit of Honeywell to add more projects to our range.

How do you look at the latest Indian defence acquisition and offsets policy?

The latest amendments to the DPP have been done to support indigenous production. It is concrete step towards providing a much-needed boost in the arm to Indian manufacturing firms such as Samtel by limiting the dependence on imports by the industry and give a distinct preference to Indian firms, if the technology is available in India. It is a welcome move, and this – along with the offsets clause in the procurement procedure – will help the Indian industry to grow.

A word about Defexpo 2014, your participation, your objectives and what you hope to achieve.

At the Defexpo exhibition, we aim to showcase our range of competencies we have developed in varieties of Displays for Military/non-military market, Opto-electronics and Defence Electronics. The booth will also provide an insight into Samtel's manufacturing and Quality processes, our Built-to-Print (BTP) capabilities, as well as our experience in Automated Test Equipment (ATEs).