

## Going great guns

**S**amtel Avionics (SA) is on its way to become India's largest supplier of multifunctional displays (MFDs) in defence aircraft. This optimism emerges from the fact that their turnover doubles every two years and they have collaborations with the best defence production specialists in the world.

"We started off with a joint venture with HAL, which was primarily for manufacturing MFDs for Sukhoi aircraft," says Puneet Kaura, executive director, SA. "Today, we consider ourselves the top most player in the aerospace and defence sector. We have joint ventures/partnerships with some of the largest companies in this sector globally, including General Dynamics of Canada, Honeywell and Thales".

SA is expecting a consolidated turnover of ₹200 crore by the end of the this financial year and has projected its turnover to reach ₹500 crore by 2016-17. SA and General Dynamics of Canada (the third largest defence equipment manufacturer globally) signed a co-operation agreement in February 2014 to pursue opportunities and co-produce displays for military and non-military segments. They will collectively be manufacturing displays for armoured vehicles for India and other markets.

"Samtel has trusted in-country capability and expertise in India, while General Dynamics will bring in battle-proven systems for local segments," says David Ibbetson, vice-president, General Dynamics. "We look forward to working with Samtel, bringing this leading technology to the Indian Army, as well as other international markets. We will leverage the strengths of both companies to pursue new opportunities".

General Dynamics's ground displays provide 360 degree situational awareness for the entire crew of a vehicle. By combining display and computing into one package, the displays offer significant savings in weight, space and power over conventional architectures.

Avionics equipment for Honeywell has been designed and developed by SA. These displays, meant for aircraft in the US, were in serial production for many months, with the supplies going regularly to Honeywell Penang for integration.

"We have signed a long-term contract for the supply of this component to Honeywell," says Kaura. "Last year, we received a repeat order valued at \$5.1 million for this equipment". SA also has got into a joint



Kaura: taking off

venture with Thales (Samtel Thales Avionics Ltd), wherein it owns 74 per cent with the remaining 26 per cent staying with Thales. This venture has been made with the objective of creating an Indian industrial base for manufacturing electronic combat system, uptronic and avionics. The total approved investment for this is ₹40 crore. This will provide the basis for all future aerospace development for Thales in India.

The joint venture SA first signed in was to form Samtel HAL Display Systems Ltd – a JV between SA and HAL created a few years back (2006) to address the avionics requirements, including test benches and systems for all HAL star platforms – both fixed and rotary wings. "The JV has achieved the unique distinction of being the first public-private partnership in defence avionics space in India to indigenously design, qualify and serial produce a multifunctional display for Sukhoi aircraft," says Kaura.

"We have set up our manufacturing unit in Greater Noida – 100,000 sq ft in size and with 250 employees, Kaura informs. "The average age of our people is 28 years. It's a young team, which comprises engineers from IITs and scientists from DRDO". The company's order book up to end 2014-15 is for over ₹1,000 crore – which will be served over the next three to five years.

SA is also looking at manufacturing displays for civil aviation market. In production, it has supplied 1,000 units of cockpit displays for small aircraft, all for exports. "We are reaching a stage of discussion which will lead to an IPO by 2016," adds Kaura. "We have taken off and will soon be cruising at greater heights".

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*In December 2009, Business India had written about how Samtel had just started to supply multi-functional displays for cockpit of Sukhoi aircraft under an agreement with HAL. Five years down the line, Samtel Avionics has become a name to reckon with in this sector, tying up with the leading defence manufacturers of the world who supply multifunctional displays for India and across the globe*