



NIMHANS has proposed to make the only brain museum in the country digital. They have sought ICMR funding for upgrading

BEHEMOTH PSU EYES GLORY DAYS AGAIN

ITI, which was a household name in Bengaluru during the 80s, is now on a revival mode. Latching on to startup bandwagon, it's foraying into new domains

RAMU PATIL @ Bengaluru

AFTER being in the red for over 15 years, India's first Public Sector Undertaking (PSU), Indian Telephone Industries Ltd (ITI), is now on a revival mode. The company is latching on to the startup bandwagon and throwing open its facilities to companies with new ideas. It is also foraying into new domains like Internet of Things (IoT).

The state-owned firm that had over 35,000 employees -- 19,000 in Bengaluru alone -- on its rolls during its heydays in the 1980s became a sick PSU in 2004. It was unable to withstand competition from foreign firms post liberalisation. But now, the company is looking to turn the tide in its favour.

"We have signed teaming agreements with 22 startups that work in engineering, mechanical and software development domains and we are offering them our manufacturing hubs," ITI CMD S Gopu told The New Indian Express. "We are ready to work with people who have good ideas and are in need of investment and manufacturing facilities."

Working with start-ups will help ITI foray into newer areas and bring in revenues. Currently, the rate of utilisation of its manufacturing facilities is around 35 per cent. "The plan is to make use of their ideas and our experience and facilities to venture into newer technologies and products," says Gopu.

The idea to rope in startups was mooted by Gopu and K Alagesan, Director-Production, ITI. Both started their careers with the PSU in 1982. "We have seen the company at its peak and also when it became sick. So we are able to identify the gaps and take steps to revive it,"



Indian Telephone Industries Ltd. was India's first Public Sector Undertaking | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

Gopu says.

The company's financials started sliding from 2002-03 and continued till 2014-15. After that, it was able to reduce its losses and even turned profitable (with government grants) in 2015-16. Next year, the company is confident of showing profit on its own.

The company's total income for 2016-17, after taking into account

government grants, was ₹1,903 crore, up from ₹1,674 crores from the previous year. As on date, it has an order book of ₹1,600 crore.

"Our losses have drastically come down from ₹247 crore in 2015-16 to ₹56 crore in 2016-17, which is a big achievement. We are confident of showing profit on our own in 2017-18," said Alagesan.

This is significant for the PSU

that had last recorded profits in 2001-02. The company, which reduced its employee strength from 35,000 to 4000 and had almost decided to close some of its units in north India, is now hiring engineers to work in new domains and is working on establishing many new facilities including a data centre by investing around ₹200 crore.

ITI holds a large chunk of land

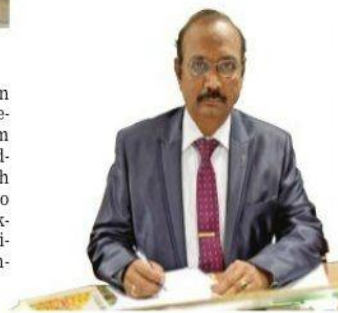
— 380 acres to be precise — on either side of Old Madras Road after KR Puram bridge. It is now monetising the land by giving it on short-term lease to government and private firms. Wary of legal complications, the management is not even considering the option of selling its land. "Sale of land is a taboo for any official, so we thought of giving it on short term lease. We do not want to start any impossible task," the CMD said.

Gopu and his team are confident of reviving the lost glory of the PSU. "That gloomy feel is now changed to lively environment. We have put the rail on tracks and it will move forward in right direction," he added.



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S Gopu, ITI CMD



Win-win partnerships

Many firms like Vijayawada-based Efftronics Systems Pvt Ltd have shown interest in partnering with ITI. "We are in talks with ITI for providing complete solutions for the Smart City project and we are also working on Swachh Bharat mission by developing a feedback mechanism to get real-time information about utilisation of restrooms," Executive Manger D Anvesh told Express. Efftronics is a 32-year-old company that provides various software solutions to Indian Railways. "We have designed the system that will be manufactured by ITI," he added.

Bengaluru-based medical diagnostic equipment maker Cardiac Design Labs too has signed an agreement and is in talks with ITI to manufacture its devices at the PSU facility. "ITI has manufacturing facilities and is a government establishment. We do not have to prove our credentials (to market our product)," said the company founder Anand Madangopal.

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FOCUS AREAS



In addition to manufacturing telecommunication equipment, focus on high density polyethylene pipes, optical fibre connectivity, 3D printing and Li-Ion batteries.

Emerging areas of business like Internet of Things (IoT), e-governance, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) projects, data centre, Wi-Fi and service sectors.



Encryption Under the

With mega projects, spring is in the air for employees



The mood has been set and it's the responsibility of all of us to carry it forward

Ramesh B R, chief manager -project & planning



Earlier, there were few orders and lack of infrastructure. Now we're getting prestigious projects from the defence sector and from C-DAC and BSNL

Gopal K, senior technical assistant

TUSHAR KAUSHIK @ Bengaluru

WHEN a firm's employees talk about its growth and mega projects, you know they really are happy. After being in a state of free fall for over a decade, the government-owned ITI's revival over the past two years seems to have been just the thing the firm needed to completely change the mood at the workplace.

While there was hardly any work for employees earlier, the firm now finds itself is understaffed having bagged numerous mega projects. And the employees don't mind having to work harder at all. They are in fact relieved that the days of having no work are over.

Generous government funding has also enabled the firm to upgrade its infrastructure and install equipment with state-of-the-art technologies. As a result of these improvements, the employees are bullish about the firm doing well. They also hope that if the company starts making profits, they too can look forward to some monetary rewards.

Chairman and Managing Direc-



Government funding helped ITI install state-of-the-art technologies | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

tor S Gopu has been in charge for just over six months. But he can sense the positivity among the staff. "There's a lot of hope and good vibes. Officers have started getting the kind of projects which they hadn't been getting for the past decade. The market has opened up and

there's a lot enthusiasm among everyone." The CMD has set a target to break even this financial year and is looking to making profits from next year.

Ramesh B R, Chief Manager-Project and Planning, said the prevailing atmosphere was a direct

consequence of the firm's improved performance and upgrade of its infrastructure. He said the firm was going through continuous growth and also getting into diverse areas.

Summing up the general feeling within the company, he said, "The mood has been set and it's the responsibility of all of us to carry it forward." He added that a sustained effort to bring back the firm from the wilderness, which he termed a "revolution," had begun in 2010.

Senior Technical Assistant Manjula M, an employee with ITI for the past 17 years, said it was a relief that there was work to be done now. Another staffer of the same grade, Gopal K, said, "Earlier, there were few orders and lack of infrastructure. Now we're getting prestigious projects from the defence sector and from C-DAC and BSNL. We're clearly on the revival path and we hope this translates into something good for the employees too after a year or two." Assistant PRO Geeta MPinto has been working for 27 years and says the last two years have been very different from the decade earlier. She says, "The people seem energetic



Equipment, general business that has been the forte of ITI for last six decades.

(NFS) project, ITI will deploy optical fibre running up to 13,000 km.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES

Around 4,000

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Geeta MPinto, Assistant PRO