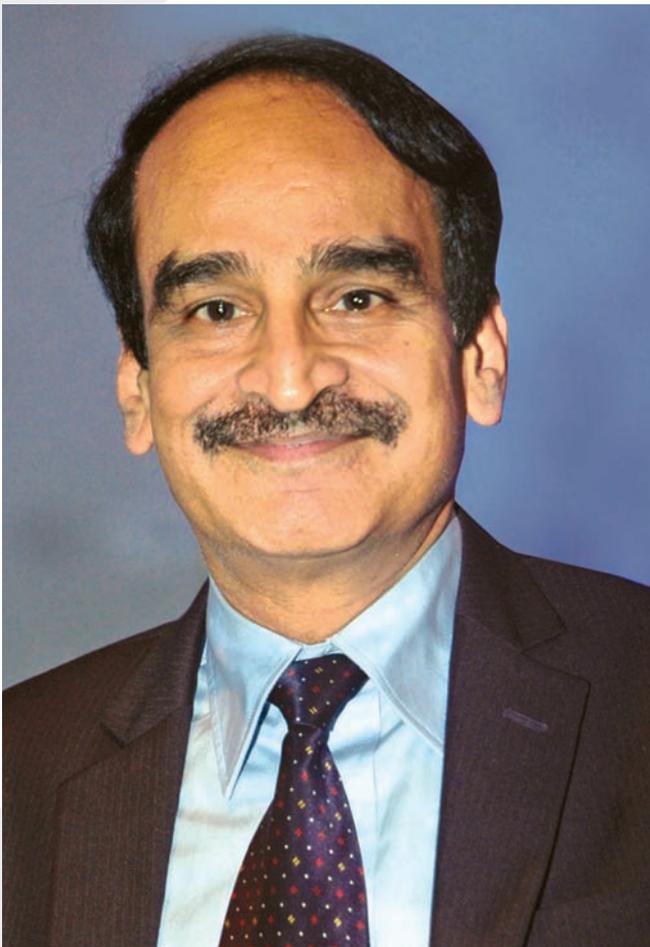


'Infrastructure projects are complex with several linkages'



Tata Consulting Engineers Limited (TCE), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Tata Sons Limited is one of India's leading engineering consulting organisations. TCE offers a wide range of multi-disciplinary services in project engineering across several sectors. **J.P Haran**, Managing Director - Tata Consulting Engineers Ltd told **Sandeep Menezes** that construction material prices are linked with energy and labour costs, and will have their impact on the overall cost of infrastructure projects.

What is TCE's long term business strategy? Does TCE intend to enter any new business areas or increase focus on some existing business segments?

Tata Consulting Engineers Ltd's long term strategy is to grow by leveraging its core competence through enhancement of value creation to customers. Our current focus is more on consolidating existing businesses and growing globally in various geographies.

Currently which are the main business segments contributing to TCE's revenue mix? Going forward, do you foresee any significant shift in this revenue mix?

Our primary business segments are power, construction management, steel and metals, mining and infrastructure. We expect this revenue mix to continue to grow in the forthcoming years.

Recently TCE and Dassault entered into partnership to offer business development and engineering consultancy services to



Cement plant, Nigeria

customers in various industries. Tell us about the main reasons for entering into this partnership?

TCE has achieved a significant level of maturity in conventional engineering offerings. In our quest to augment our value proposition to customers, we realized that Dassault Systemes technical platforms will serve our objective. With the domain expertise of Tata Consulting Engineers Ltd and the technology platforms available with Dassault Systemes combined, we intend to offer new solution offerings in areas very important to customers such as construction schedule management, safety management, and cost control.

With huge emphasis on infrastructure development nationwide, which infrastructure segments are expected to witness maximum investments?

In the near term, we expect power transmission and distribution, roads and rail network, ports and harbours, renewable energy, etc will receive significant investments.

Since TCE also offers procurement assistance, tell us about the rising construction material prices and its resultant impact on ongoing & proposed infrastructure projects nationwide?

While the general inflation is a matter of concern, the construction material prices are more linked with energy and labour costs and will have their impact on the overall cost of infrastructure projects. The key will be to manage these projects efficiently and within budgets to minimise the impact of inflation

What are the main challenges faced during project management and coordination while implementing infrastructure construction in India?

Infrastructure projects in itself are complex with several linkages. Several issues pertaining to land acquisition, environmental approvals, rehabilitation, social dissent even after obtaining necessary clearances, etc., hamper progress even after project commencement. Inadequate planning and resource deployment are key challenges faced commonly in project management and coordination.

It is necessary to work on these challenges by bringing in complete clarity before project commencement as well as ensuring rigorous planning and monitoring by employing professional agencies across projects.

Increasing accidents at various construction sites point out that safety and quality certification has yet to become a priority across infrastructure projects. Comment.

In the Indian context, the issue of safety is indeed a point of serious concern as (Indian) record of accidents has great scope for improvement as compared to global standards. Apart from construction sites, accidents in daily life are also high in India. This gives a pointer to the fact that as a community we need to become more aware and we need to spread awareness to the entire population.

Safety has to be planned and achieved right from the time the project is planned, designed, procured, constructed and commissioned. The notion that safety is an issue only to be addressed during construction is a very narrow and short term consideration. Safety is a feature that has to be part of the operations' DNA at every stage. Agencies with good safety record need to be encouraged and lauded in comparison to others with lesser safety record.

Availability of trained manpower is an issue faced by all epc, construction players across India. Tell us about the extent of trained manpower shortage in India's construction sector? As a leading project management consultant, how do you suggest this situation be handled?

Availability of trained manpower is a point of concern in the country mainly because focused and industry-specific training is not happening around us. In a country where the percentage of population reaching higher levels of education is in single digits, training and capability building is pre-requisite for social elevation as well as empowering the industry with necessary skilled resources. Additionally we are also exporting manpower to other countries. In my opinion there is a need for a quantum jump in training institutes such as ITIs to be set up on par with international standards. ■

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