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Emerging from lost grounds

Cables Industry has managed to keep the zing alive with constant innovation despite the dwindling statistics. Kritika Ajmani finds out...

After witnessing a growth of 25.7% last financial year, cables industry experienced a major downfall of 14% in the first quarter of present fiscal. According to The Indian Electrical and Electronics Manufacturers Association (IEEMA), the apex Indian industry association of manufacturers of electrical, industrial electronics and allied equipment, "For the first time in 10 years, the Indian electrical equipment industry has seen a negative growth of 2.4% in the first quarter (Q1) of the current fiscal (2012-13) compared to the corresponding period a year ago (13.82%) and sequential quarter Q4 FY12 (14.10%). The cable industry has witnessed a double digit negative growth of 12.9%."

"The cable industry has been badly affected by the overall sentiments of the electrical equipments industry. Noticing the prevailing trend in the power, telecom and construction industry, the cable industry, which is highly dependent on all these sectors, is bound to face a storm," stated Vishal Gakhar, Director General, IEEMA.

Expecting the trends to continue from last year, many organizations had expanded capacities envisaging an increase in demand. However, the unexpected downfall has rendered the organizations almost helpless. Expressing his concern, Hiten A Khatau, Chief Managing Director, Cables Corporation of India says, "Cable industry did show a growth last year; however, this first quarter has already shown a decline of 14%. Expecting demands to grow, the industry had already expanded capacities and now there is over capacity."

Blaming it on the increase in imports of goods, which has almost doubled in one year, he further added, "We also have competition from international players who are coming with entry pricing strategies, making it difficult for the already existing demand supply equation and fierce competition. We are awaiting the situation to improve with the rise in demand anticipated."

Latest innovations

Although, the current situation is disappointing, major players in the industry have not lost hope. Many organizations are constantly improvising to meet the ambitious demands of the industry. "We are working on new products for special applications; the products, which will reduce cost to exist in the competitive industry. We are also upgrading our extra high voltage range to include 400 kV cables thereby making our project execution skills more efficient," briefs Khatau.

KEI Industry's latest product 'Fire Survival Cables' are designed such that they continue to operate for a defined minimum period of time in-case of fire. This product range is tested in NABL accredited labs which is considered as the highest decree of recognition for being a competent laboratory in India. The FS cables have also been tested and have received the approval of BRE for Fire survival. These cables are supplied to oil refineries, oil Wells , steel plants and power plants with KEI already reaching out to ONGC Petro chemicals, DMRC, BHEL to name a few. On this development, Anil Gupta, CMD, KEI Industries Ltd, said, "Since inception, we have firmly believed in the philosophy of constant growth and innovation with customer satisfaction being our top priority. Our products undergo rigorous quality checks in our world-class,

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'Green cables' for application in off-shore installations

VARUN SAWHNEY, Vice President (Marketing & HR), Cords Cable Industries throws some light on the past, present and future of the cable industry as well as how he plans to steer Cords Cable Industries through these tough times.

What are your plans to maintain sustainable growth through the dicey times?

Cords has extensive plans for modernization, reducing internal operating costs, diversification into new geographical markets, developing new cable products and entering new industry sectors. This would definitely result in greater sustained growth for the company in the current year as well as for the future.

What are the new products or innovations that your organization has come up with?

Over the last couple of years Cords has put considerable focus on development of new and improved products. Some of the products developed are - Solar PV cables for the PV Solar power plants and Fieldbus cables for applications in high-speed digital data transmission. These cables are used mainly in refineries and power plants. Cords is amongst very few manufacturers who have this product. We have done many successful supplies of Fieldbus cables both in India and overseas. Further, Cords has made several supplies of EPR (rubber) insulated cables both in Indian and overseas markets. These cables are used in refineries and oil and gas applications; low temperature cables have been designed for use in extremely cold regions and are suitable for ambient temperatures of upto 50°C. Cords has made several supplies of these cables in some overseas markets; Cords has also developed 'Green cables' for application in off-shore installations where the cables are exposed to various hydrocarbons. These cables are a suitable replacement for Lead Sheath cables. As the use of Lead is banned in several parts of the world, the ability of these cables to replace lead makes it a better alternative.

We have executed some orders for these cables already and expect the demand for these cables to rise in future. Further, Cords' Silicon rubber cables are used in applications at refineries and oil and gas industries. We have few large orders in hand for these cables.

What will be the plans in terms of marketing?

With regards to the marketing effort we have taken up the difficult task of adding more and more customers in existing market segments with Cords. This requires a detailed and persistent marketing effort for which the company is geared up. We have created well organized Business Development and Product Development divisions in Cords. These divisions have a specific task for the development of new markets as well as new cable products and focuses to improve the existing products. Some of the markets that we are targeting are – marine, shipyards, offshore, mining, railways, metro rail and defense. On the overseas front we are moving aggressively on various approvals in Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE and Saudi Arabia.

What will be the latest developments and innovations that your organization would witness in near future?

Some of the initiatives on active and final stages are the development of several special cables for railway's future projects of Train Protection Warning System (TPWS). This rail warning system is an ambitious project of the Railways to be completed in phases. The pilot project of the Railways is partly over and further work is on. As per information available with us, the Indian Railways plans to have this protection system on all rail lines in the country. India has the world's second largest rail network, so, we can imagine the scale of work. Cords has developed few types of special Balise cables for the Railway's TPWS project.

Cords is also developing some special signaling quad and DLR cables for metro railways. Pertaining to the many metro rail projects being planned in the country, this segment along with the railways signaling systems would substantially contribute to the company's operations in the coming years.

technologically advanced labs ensuring high quality and superior performance."

The main application of fire survival cables is in fire alarm systems, as this cable continues to operate for a specified period in the event of a fire. In addition to fire alarm systems, these cables are also used in other safety-critical wiring circuits, such as those powering emergency lighting, data recording system and sprinkler pumps.

Fire Survival cables are also required in commercial/residential buildings for more sophisticated alarm systems, emergency telephone lines, CCTV and public address systems that continues to operate during a fire and also in critical equipments such as elevators.