

“If an organisation has to progress, it has to move towards digitalisation very fast”

Lumax DK Jain Group is a leading manufacturer of automotive components and systems in India and a market leader in lighting & gear shifter systems. In this tête-à-tête with Juili Eklahare, Vineet Sahni, Group Chief Executive Officer, Lumax DK Jain Group & Senior Executive Director, Lumax Industries, talks about the priorities for manufacturers today, an enhanced focus on low-cost automation and robotics in Lumax Industries and the potential collaboration opportunities for Lumax Group in the future. Excerpts...

Can you tell us about the new normal in the automotive industry, today? What are the priorities for manufacturers now?

Employee safety has become paramount; it was always there but with COVID-19, it has gained a lot more prominence. I can give a bit of a contradiction – earlier in manufacturing, we used to say “save space” or “cut down on waste of movement”. Now, on the contrary, we are telling people

to expand. Another big change that is coming in is that we were operating on a very lean system of inventories. Now, we are planning for inventories to be available just in case there is a second wave. An extremely high priority now is the safety. Fortunately, everybody in the supply chain has understood safety as never

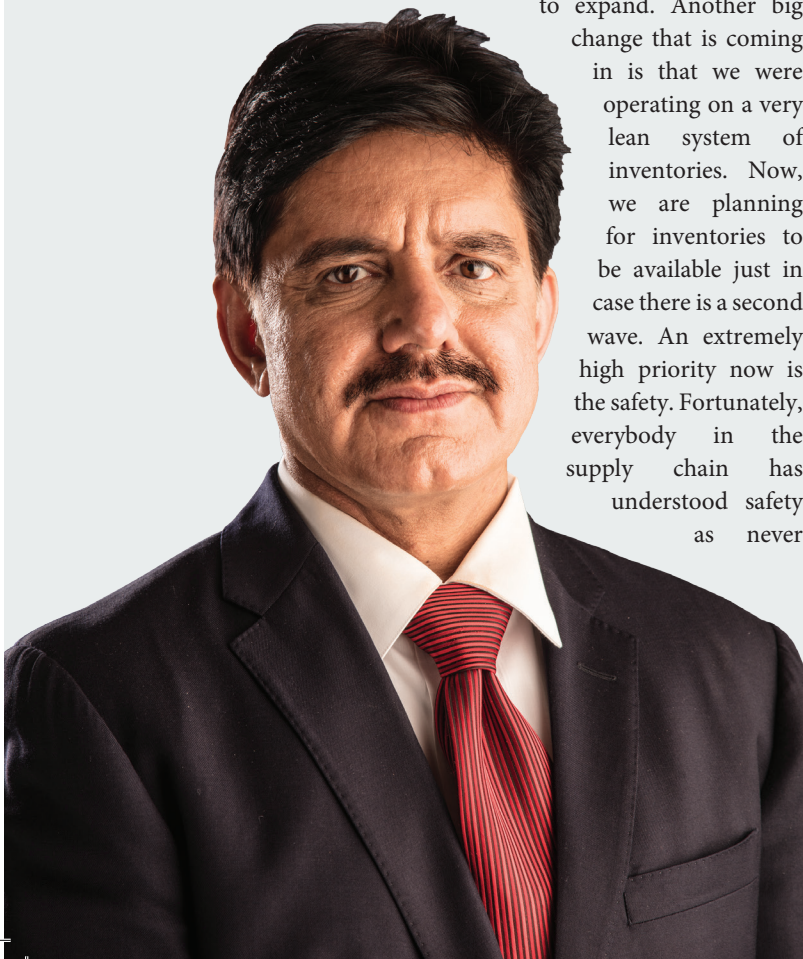
before, which will probably be very good in the long run.

What are the opportunities that you are seeking for Lumax Industries in the current coronavirus pandemic and social distancing norm? How has your company prepared itself to offer solutions to its customers and increase operational efficiency in these unprecedented times?

We have found a very efficient way of connecting with the masses through virtual meetings, which was not the case before; there was always a limitation to the connect in the physical meeting. However, now, there are no limitations. Another significant point is that the cost structuring will take a new shape for our company by implementing certain learnings from the COVID times, and it may help us in improving our profitability in the future. We have enhanced our focus on low-cost intelligent automation because this helps in social distancing, while maintaining the desired quality levels of the product, which improves productivity. Besides, the use of robots is helping us and we have increased that application. Also, a lot of empowerment has come during this time — people have taken it upon themselves and have been delivering with a lot of empowerment.

What are some alternative materials that Lumax Industries is looking at to bring down the weight of the vehicle? Also, can you tell us about the work you are doing in matrix lighting?

We are working on alternative materials but that is a long process. Our main focus is on using the same material to technically reduce the weight, which is a faster process, giving us the same advantage. For example, if a particular part has a thickness of 3 mm, we are now able to produce the same part by better design & manufacturing capability into 1.8 or 1.9 mm.





Vineet Sahni is a veteran in the automotive industry, having demonstrated his unique leadership style. He has a rich experience of more than 20 years in the automotive lighting sector and has been instrumental in promoting self-reliance in technology for Indian engineers.

So, one eventually has the same result with much lesser weight. Also, better tool design leads to weight reduction. The second thing that's going on is changing the material; for instance, in reflector material, if we were to change from material A to material B, then it reduces the weight.

Coming to matrix lighting, it hasn't come to India and Indian OEMs yet. But we are developing a prototype for particular customers, where we are trying to offer a low-cost solution of matrix lighting, which is suitable for the Indian market.

You say that many new technologies are being developed in India at the same time as in the global market. Do you think the COVID-19 pandemic has affected this in any way? What are the future opportunities in India?

No, the technology part continues to be what it was. During COVID-19, engineers have been working from their homes throughout. Even for Lumax, the first thing we did was to move their systems to their homes. So, the technology & new product development activity did not stop at all.

People have realised the importance of human beings in the organisation, from a casual worker to a truck driver, including the skill related to that function. The importance of having a small training school/ learning centre in the company has also emerged. Additionally, if we have to have a robust supply chain, it is imperative that not only us but the entire supply chain be sensitised & has trained manpower – from us to our supplier to their supplier.

One of Lumax Industries' growth drivers has been its

extensively long collaboration with Stanley Electric Company, Japan. Do you look at investing in more collaborations in the future to help flourish further?

Yes, we do look at more collaborations which has been our growth model, because we are able to manage the relationships with our partners very well. This is the cooperation model that we would like to follow even for the future, which we are already working on. There are several opportunities that have come up due to regulatory changes in the country and also a shift in technologies in various products, which is leading to the potential collaborations.

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Do you think digitalisation technologies will address the challenges arising out of the disruptions in manufacturing & supply chain and in what way?

Digitalisation is definitely going to help. If an organisation has to progress, it has to move towards digitalisation very fast. So, getting into ERP systems, Industry 4.0, etc has to come in in the future. I would also like to say that we have to balance the capital expenditure and the results.

What are the plans ahead for Lumax Industries, five years down the line?

We do have a vision 2027 document ready with us. We have clear plans that we have to grow at a particular rate and get in some new product lines into our company. While doing that, we also have plans to improve our margins so that we are able to support our stakeholders. Along with all this, we need to improve the corporate governance of the organisation, which is a continuous improvement process. □