

Forms & Gears looks for tie-ups

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IN THE last 35 years, Asia's leading fixtures company Forms and Gears (F&G) has built a strong client list that includes Tata Motors, Caterpillar, John Deere, Ford, LMW and Mazak. It plans to leverage on its technology tie-up with Vekttek, a market leader for hydraulics in the US, to introduce high pressure hydraulic fixtures in India. In the Rs 100 crore-high pressure hydraulic fixtures industry, excluding cheap manual fixture players, the firm claims to have pioneered the use of high-pressure hydraulic fixtures with the Indica cylinder block fixtures for Heller machines supplied to Tata Motors in 1997.

F&G is keen on striking an alliance with a US or European company, that could even result in diluting a majority stake to the foreign partner. Its MD Reji Varghese told ET. Hoping to cash in on its location advantage besides asset base of Rs 20 crore in the form of plant and machinery, the Rs 10 crore-F&G is looking at a technology pact that would help it sustain its operations. It has pegged real estate value of its land in the Guindy industrial estate at Rs 30 crore. Rather than setting up a wholesome fixture facility, OEs chose F&G as it has the design capability and the customisation expertise, he said noting a strategic alliance with investors in the same industry would raise the value proposition.

Its high pressure hydraulic fixtures now run at most automobile plants in India especially for the precision engine and transmission components, using which companies have increased productivity, reduced cycle time and reduced operator dependence. "Directly or indirectly, vehicles have a F&G fixture," he said. Varghese says, "Our company has over 35 years of experience and expertise in the field. Some of the biggest projects in India have rolled out on F&G fixtures. From Hyundai's Santro, Accent and Sonata to Ford's Endeavour and Fusion, Tata Motor's Indica, Maruti's Alto, Cummins, John Deere, Caterpillar, Toyota, some of the biggest names world-wide have profitably partnered with F&G."

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Computer scheme for aided schools



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IF YOU thought computer education and online learning were the preserve of kids in elite schools, think again. As part of a 'digital equaliser' (DE) programme of the American India Foundation (AIF), supported by Applied Materials, children of two government-aided schools in Chennai will now have the opportunity of learning computer applications and have audio-visual guides to supplement classroom teaching. The three-year programme aims to bridge the digital and educational divide by providing computers, software, internet access and training to children and teachers in underprivileged schools. "The most important thing kids is they see what can be done with technology," Applied Materials managing director (global community affairs) Mark Walker told ET. What started as a pilot project three years ago in Karnataka, has now grown to cover more than 80 schools in and around Bangalore. "The government of Karnataka found the programme effective and signed an MoU with AIF and Applied Materials to run the programme in more government schools," Walker said.

Now, the programme is being replicated at Dr Guruswamy Mudaliyar Thondaiman Thuthuva Vellalar Higher Secondary School (GMTTVHSS) and Panathope Railway Colony Aided Higher Secondary School in Chennai. While computers and other hardware and teacher training is being provided by Applied Materials, the recruitment and maintenance part of it is being taken care of by AIE. Teachers are trained to impart computer education and integrate technology into the regular curriculum. So, by the time the programme comes to an end, each school is equipped enough to continue it on its own.

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