

'Industry is striving hard to increase its share'

The domestic machine tools sector, an integral part of the capital goods industry, is passing through a difficult time. **Anbu Varathan**, Director General & CEO, Indian Machine Tool Manufacturers' Association (IMTMA), speaks to **Arbind Gupta** about the industry's plans to overcome the challenges in the short term and ramp up its overall capabilities in the long term



How has the ongoing pandemic impacted the machine tool industry? How is it preparing itself in the medium to long term?

The Indian machine tools industry has experienced a slowdown in 2019-20 and the outbreak of the corona virus has impacted it further this year. Machine tools, being a part of capital goods industry, had witnessed some stressful times in the first quarter, when the lockdown was announced, to the middle of the second quarter. The industry has now begun exploring opportunities and diverging into other emerging sectors, such as railways, medical equipment, electronics, etc, which will gain more traction in the medium-to-long-term. The auto sector has recovered partially from the second quarter and we expect more positive developments in the next few quarters, with improving domestic demand.

What sort of progression (in terms of production and technology) has been made in the last decade or so?

Industrial units are adopting digital technologies and using software tools for designing, drafting, manufacturing and supply chain. With the advent and use of sensors, actuators and smart devices, which are becoming more affordable, devices, machines and sub-systems are getting networked and are providing communication to the outside world dynamically. The 3 Cs (connect, communicate & collaborate) provide status information in real-time, which is used for status display and monitoring of machines and processes primarily and can be used for operation, maintenance and decision making in a factory environment.

What are the various measures the association taking to make the industry future ready?

IMTMA has been taking the necessary steps, on several fronts, for the last so many years and will continue to do so. The tech centres set up by the association in Bengaluru, Pune and Gurugram impart training in various aspects of manufacturing, including technologies connected to Industry 4.0, additive manufacturing, automation, robotics, design aspects, etc. To develop indigenous products and technologies, IMTMA with support from the Department of Heavy Industry (DHI) provided assistance to set up the Advanced Manufacturing Technology Development Centre at Research Park in IIT-Madras. The centre is offering solutions for developing advanced technologies in machine tools and manufacturing sector.

Besides, an advanced machine tool testing facility has been set up at Central Manufacturing Technology Institute campus in Bengaluru to provide testing and development support to engineering and machine tool industries. Tumakuru Machine Tool Park has also been set up near Bengaluru by the government of Karnataka with support from DHI. The machine tool park is expected to make domestic capital goods and machine tool sectors globally competitive.

What is the industry doing to reduce dependence on imports and to play an active role in 'Make in India' initiative?

Currently, the domestic market share of Indian machine tool industry is about 50 per cent. For some machines, like turning centre, the market share is

more than 70 per cent. The industry is striving hard to increase the domestic market share of consumption to 65-70 per cent in the next few years. For technology development and indigenisation, DHI has come up with a pilot 'Scheme for Enhancement of Competitiveness in Capital Goods Sector' for new products and technologies development. These are being tested at AMTDC in IIT-Madras, where industries and academia have in collaboration successfully developed 11 products and processes. Under the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser, next generation grinding machines have been developed. With this, that is, the industry's own initiatives and government's focus on *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, industries will strive hard to enhance their product capabilities which can lead to substitution of imports and later on open avenues for exports.

What is the industry doing to capture growth in the MSME sector?

The industry has been taking several initiatives for ushering in MSME sector's growth. It has strengthened public procurement by making tender terms equitable and encouraging for MSMEs. IMTMA has initiated this process at ministry level. And, its cluster formation activities are more focussed on demographic region to address MSMEs. The association has been advising stakeholders on the various government initiatives and creating awareness on policy changes and providing training on advanced technologies through online webinars and training programmes.

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