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FIRST INDIAN COMPANY TO FEATURE AMONG THE WORLD'S TOP 50 PRIVATE WATER COMPANIES



Describe about your business entity in the field of infrastructure; and let us know about your expert opinion on the Indian infra market's current situation.

SPML Infra Limited is amongst India's leading infrastructure development companies with exemplary track record. In a legacy of over four decades, the company has executed more than 600 projects thus creating significant assets for drinking water facilities, wastewater treatment, integrated sewerage

network, better municipal waste management, power transmission & distribution and rural electrification. SPML Infra Ltd. is the first Indian company featured among the World's Top 50 Private Water Companies as per research conducted by Global Water Intelligence, London. SPML Infra also features among India's Top 500 Largest Corporations as per Fortune India report.

In the past over three months, COVID-19 has posed unprecedented challenges and has changed the entire business scenario at global level. The situation in India

is equally challenging and business plans are being put to test rigorously. The unprecedented lockdown and restrictions on construction activities, migrating workforce and supply chain disruptions had a cascading effect on contractual obligations related to infrastructure projects.

But COVID-19 disruptions are going to accelerate adoption of technology-enabled project construction and management activities. The deployment of a range of technologies and smart methods for infrastructure development such as: drones for communication and enforcement of social distancing rules, AI-based remote temperature sensing, Cloud Computing, 3D Design, BIM, Machine Learning, 3D Printing, Robotics, real-time visibility for resources, assets and services, real-time dashboards and data sharing including the use of smartphone for effectively communicating and collaborating will become the key components for a successful construction project.

What your latest successful project in your niche area is of infra works; and what are your recent achievements for completing your pipeline projects?

SPML Infra Limited has successfully completed a number of projects that is helping the company to provide drinking water facilities to over 50 million people in the country. It has executed a number of projects both in water and energy sector in the past one year. The Saurashtra-Narmada Avtaran Irrigation (SAUNI) Yojana, Phase II project being India's largest irrigation and drinking water supply project in Gujarat has been executed by us.

The SAUNI Yojana envisage to irrigate 1.8 million hectare of land in Saurashtra, Kutch and North Gujarat benefiting millions of farmers and supplying drinking water facilities to 39 million people across 132 towns and 11,456 villages. We also completed other water supply projects in Rajasthan for providing drinking water facilities to about a million rural populations under different regional water supply schemes including Gagreen Water Supply, Nawa and Dhannaser Water Supply schemes. We have also completed a number of power transmission & distribution projects in different states including Extension of 400/220 kV Durgapur Sub-station in West Bengal; 220 KV GIS Sub-Station in Faridabad, Haryana; 220 kV Grid Substation at Ratu, Jharkhand; 132 kV GIS Sub-Station in Bajkul, West Bengal among others.

The company has also received a good number of water supply and power infrastructure development projects over the last few months including Rs. 723.87 Crore order for Sauni Yojana Phase 3 from Gujarat, Rs. 546.96 Crore order for Bangalore water supply among several other new projects for water, wastewater and power T&D projects.

Tell us about the growth challenges which the overall infrastructure industry is facing progressively for the year 2020; and what is your positive strategy to combat the crisis of labour to finance for your business plans?

The sudden surge of COVID-19 pandemic has deeply hurt the economies around the world as all countries from bigger to minor are facing the heat of lockdowns, disruption and unfortunate mounting cases and demises.



Due to lockdowns in India as well, the construction work for almost all infrastructure projects were stopped causing concern related to financial pressure, reduced working capital, mounting cost of maintaining labor force, apprehension of cost increase in construction materials due to sluggish import from producing countries among the challenges. The year 2020 began with challenges with financial stability of many companies will remain be flaying beyond the current fiscal with substantial downgrade in earnings. Many construction companies in India are facing liquidity crunch with pending payments and mismatch in fund inflow and outflow.

SPML Infra Limited is executing a number of infrastructure development projects in water, wastewater and power transmission & distribution segments across the country. We have started our project execution with utmost care after the lock down situation is relaxed by the government. There is more stress on safety and well-being of employees and work force with very strict protocol related to health, cleaning and disinfection, maintaining social distancing, thermal checking, face masks etc. Thankfully, there was not much impact of labor migration to our projects as most of our work force remained at the site after the lock down was announced and our project and management teams have taken

care of their requirements during the period. We are monitoring the supply chain to ensure availability of material and closely monitoring the business scenario for maintaining financial security and taking every possible step to mitigate the crisis.

Primarily, in what manner do you think the government of India is supportive of developing the infra sector in order to channelize the gradually sleeping GDP and bring back some light of hope and enlightenment for boosting demands in the market; especially, talk about your field and the ray of sunshine you see to manage your business?

The devastation by the pandemic has absolutely dented and companies have suffered. The issue now is of limiting the damage and making use of the new opportunities that may come our way. The Government of India is taking all necessary steps to protect Indian industry from the threat and announced Rs.1.7 lakh crore relief package in March followed by Reserve Bank of India initiative to facilitate increased lending by the financial institutions. The government has recently



announced the stimulus package of Rs. 20 lakh crore under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan to support MSME, Agriculture and other sectors to inject liquidity and help the Indian economy towards the recovery path. The government has recently announced Rs. 30,000 crore for the flagship water supply scheme Jal Jeevan Mission to be made available to states for providing tap water connection to over 14.8 crore rural households. This scheme has a plan outlay of Rs.3.6 lac crore for five years period. All these efforts will help boosting the infrastructure industry to rebound.

What is it that you forecast for the period of 2020-2022? Do you think that the Indian market can plan out an exit from the challenges and draw some intensive successful movements for doing business activities?

I am very hopeful of our country controlling the pandemic soon and the economic activities will rebound. The long term outlook of infrastructure sector is looking optimistic as many new schemes and projects announced by the government during the last stint and also in the current year budget will be implemented. It is estimated that

India will have a requirement of Rs. 50 trillion investments for infrastructure development by 2022 and witnessing significant interest from international investors in the space, it seems that we will certainly make this possible.

What expectations you have from the government's plans and reforms?

The government and RBI are working to combat the slowing GDP growth and help the construction sector as it forms the backbone of several other sectors. The EPF contribution by the Government for some segments of workers in the organized sector will help the affected work force to handle the challenges of the lockdown more conveniently. We are hopeful that the RBI will come out with more relief measures for distressed businesses including a long term moratorium on debt repayments and redefinition of non-performing assets for giving an opportunity for distressed businesses across sectors. We also expect that the government and development agencies should increase the spending on infrastructure projects as soon as the situation becomes normal to reinvigorate the industry and regain the momentum of economy ■

