

Argentum Motors revives Daewoo plant



ARGENTUM Motors, which recently acquired the defunct Daewoo Motors plant at Surajpur, plans to restart operations later this year. The company, promoted by BVR Subbu, Ajai Singh of SpiceJet and Ashish Deora of India Online Network, has also attracted international private equity investors. According to Subbu, besides manufacturing auto components, the company is also looking at other options. It is in talks with several international automakers, both for the supply of components, and possible roll-out of truck cabs and chassis frames for light and heavy commercial vehicles.

The company will be investing over \$30 million to revive the plant, which has a capacity to manufacture 400,000 engines and 200,000 auto bodies, said Subbu, a former president of Hyundai Motors India.

DuPont to set up \$50 million R&D unit in Hyderabad

YET another American technology giant has decided to set up its research and development centre (R&D) in India. E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Co (DuPont) will be investing over \$50 million to set up an R&D unit in Hyderabad, its first in India and the sixth major facility outside of the US.

The DuPont Knowledge Centre will staff over 300 scientists and other employees, which will double in about three years. It will be located on a 15-acre plot within the ICICI Knowledge Park in Hyderabad. DuPont has overseas R&D units in China, Japan, Taiwan, Germany and Switzerland.

The unit will focus on discovery research as well as application development in areas such as molecular biology, bio-informatics and polymer synthesis. It will also focus on bio-fuels, renewable energy and life sciences. The American technology major has an annual R&D budget of \$1.3 billion and employs nearly 5,000 scientists and engineers around the world.

DuPont has production facilities in India for its engineering polymers, crop protection products, liquid packaging systems and for seeds.





Swiss cement major Holcim to invest over \$2.5 billion in India

SWISS cement major Holcim will invest over \$2.5 billion in India over the next five years, setting up new plants and raising its capacity by 25 million tonnes. The world's second-largest cement manufacturer has controlling stakes in two of India's top cement firms, ACC and Ambuja Cements, which together have a combined production capacity of 45 million tonnes.

According to Amit Kothari, member of the Holcim Asia-Pacific management team, the group aims to grow at around 10 per cent annually in India.

The India operations account for over 10 per cent of the group's \$20 billion global sales. It has 25 plants and a 25 per cent share of the market in India.

Reliance Communications forays into Uganda

Reliance Communications Ltd has made its first move in the international mobile market by acquiring Uganda-based Anupam Global Soft (U) Ltd, a company holding Public Infrastructure Provider License (PIPL) and Public Service Provider License (PSPL) issued by Uganda Communications Commission.

Reliance Communications plans to offer mobile, fixed line, internet, national and international long distance services, in addition to WiMax and Wifi services in Uganda, under the existing licenses.

The company has received spectrum allocation and plans to launch its mobile services by the end of 2008.

The Reliance Communications Group plans to invest up to \$500 million in establishing a high quality, fully-IP enabled



integrated telecom network in Uganda to capture the significant growth potential in this emerging African market.

"The Uganda telecom market is similar to what India was eight years back," says Punit Garg, president, global business, Reliance Communications. "Our expertise in managing the world's largest integrated telecom network and deep understanding of diverse consumer segments makes us confident of achieving a significant position to add further value for our two million shareholders."

Reliance Communications has ambitious global expansion plans and is concentrating on opportunities in emerging Asian and African markets.

Briefs

Singapore investor acquires stake in Indian travel portal

iXIGO.com, India's most awarded travel search engine, has received an undisclosed sum of first-round financing from BAF Spectrum Pte Ltd, a leading Singapore-based investment firm.

The investment will fund iXIGO's aggressive marketing plans and its strategy to scale-up searchable travel content. "Online travel purchases are driving the expansion of e-commerce in India," remarks William Klippgen, executive director at BAF Spectrum, who has joined iXIGO's board of directors.

Klippgen co-founded Zoomit.com, which merged with Kelkoo to form Europe's leading price-comparison mega-portal. Kelkoo was acquired by Yahoo! in 2004 for more than \$550 million.

Warner Bros in strategic alliance with Indian firm

Warner Bros Motion Picture Imaging (MPI), the Hollywood studio's 4k post production facility, with films like Ocean's 13 to its credit, has entered into a strategic alliance with Prime Focus, the India-based post production house with operations in the UK, the US, Canada and India.

The tie-up will allow both companies to move content seamlessly from one facility to another, using the most cost efficient method, which will allow them to process work in the time zone that most closely meets individual filmmaker's needs and schedules.

Satyam sets up Life Sciences Centre of Excellence

Satyam, a leading global business and information technology services company, has set up its Life Sciences Centre of Excellence (CoE). The facility was inaugurated by Satyam founder and chairman, B Ramalinga Raju on the sidelines of RxCellence, the Life Science's conclave which the IT major hosted at the Satyam School of Leadership in Hyderabad.

Walt Disney injects an additional \$330 million into UTV group

THE Walt Disney Company (Southeast Asia) Pte Ltd, a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company, will invest \$203 million in UTV Software Communications Ltd, marking one of the largest media and entertainment foreign investments in India.

It will also acquire a 15 per cent stake worth \$30 million in UTV Global Broadcasting Ltd (UGBL). Walt Disney's investments in UTV and UGBL, together with the warrants to be issued to Ronnie Screwvala's Promoter Group, takes the total deal size to about \$330 million.

The investment reinforces Walt Disney's interest in the Indian market and complements the fast-growing Disney-branded businesses and the long-held joint-venture in ESPN STAR Sports. With this investment, its stake in UTV will go up from 13.7 per cent to 32.1 per cent on a fully diluted share capital basis.

UGBL is the parent company of its two wholly-owned subsidiaries, Genx Entertainment and UTV Entertainment Television. Genx has launched two youth entertainment channels through the Bindass brand, whilst UTV Television Entertainment has just launched The World Movies channel and is about to launch UTV Hindi movies channel.

"This partnership across movies, TV content, interactive and broadcasting endorses our leadership position in India and South East Asia and propels our already growing global story," says Ronnie Screwvala. "Over the last year we have learnt to work well together and the speed at which this collaborative deal was put together is testament to the strong working relationship we have built."

Japanese firms opt for i-flex's core banking solution

i-flex solutions, a leading provider of technology solutions to the global banking and financial services industry, announced that Rakuten, Inc. and Tokyo Tomin Bank have launched an online banking branch with FLEXCUBE, i-flex's core banking solution. The online branch is hosted at 'Rakuten Ichiba', the largest e-marketplace in Japan.

The branch will provide customers with quick and easy access to account information and easy-to-use online banking services, while protecting their financial data. It will also give customers of 'Rakuten Ichiba' the convenience of a 24/7 online bank, and added channels such as ATM and mobile banking. The services can be directly accessed through 'Rakuten Ichiba' IDs, thus providing an integrated online experience to the customer.

Rakuten, Inc. provides the online marketplace, "Rakuten Ichiba" for sellers to market their products to internet shoppers. Rakuten Financial Solution is the banking and financial services subsidiary of Rakuten, Inc. The Tokyo Tomin Bank serves the funding needs of small- and medium-sized enterprises. It provides quality financial services to individuals and smaller businesses in Tokyo and other neighbouring areas.

i-flex solutions, majority owned by Oracle, is a leader in providing IT solutions to the financial services industry. Oracle Global (Mauritius), the foreign promoter, has an 81 per cent share in the Mumbai-registered company.

Alstom India wins \$150 million export orders

ALSTOM Projects India Ltd (APIL) has won two export orders worth \$150 million from firms in Uganda and the UAE. The orders, for the Bujagali Hydro Electric Power station at Jinja in Uganda and for the Fujairah Independent Water and Power Plant, one of the world's largest desalination plants, will be executed at its hydro facility in Vadodara.

APIL is a majority owned subsidiary company of Alstom SA France, the global leader in power generation and rail infrastructure. Alstom is one of the oldest foreign companies in India – with a presence since 1910 – employing close to 3,300 people across its five engineering centres, a software technology facility at Bangalore, three manufacturing units (Hydro in Vadodara, Boilers in Durgapur and Shahabad) and sales offices in Mumbai and Delhi/NCR.

The Vadodara unit is among Alstom's three large hydro equipment manufacturing hubs, along with those in China and Brazil. APIL, listed both on the Bombay and National Stock Exchanges, has a turnover of over \$300 million.

Microsoft launches digital advertising platform in India

Microsoft has launched a unique digital advertising platform in India that aims to simplify digital advertising and create a larger eco-system connecting advertisers and publishers.

The US software giant launched the platform in India with four leading firms - Bollywood Hungama, Equity Master, HDFC Sec and Facebook, each of whom are leaders in their respective genres – entertainment, finance and social networking.

Microsoft, which has also launched its Video Ad Platform with MSN Video and its mobile advertising initiative, will provide display, rich media, contextual and video advertising solutions for partners on the platform. NDTV Media, the exclusive sales partner for the Microsoft Digital Advertising Solutions, will bring advertisers to the platform.

Microsoft has also launched its mobile advertising initiative in India. Advertisers will now be able to buy search keywords on Live Search deployed on Vodafone Live and also display banners on MSN Mobile portal at www.msnmobile.in.

"In the last one year the online advertising market has grown rapidly, the time is right to build a large digital eco-system by connecting advertisers and publishers on a Platform," says Rajnish, India head, Microsoft Digital Advertising Solutions.

According to him, the digital ad platform simplifies the processes of advertising online and also provides advertisers an opportunity to reach out to a diverse and high quality audience.

Jaspreet Bindra, India country manager, Online Services, Microsoft, notes that with more than 200-million-plus mobile phones in the country, advertising solutions on mobile will help grow the advertiser base. "Through this new platform, we're bringing yield management, and our mobile advertising will monetise mobile content. We're treating the internet as a 'brand-building medium,' which will allow advertisers to build their brands online."

Briefs

Adventity launches Global Delivery Centre in Chennai

Adventity, India's leading end-to-end knowledge and business process outsourcing company, has opened a Global Delivery Centre in Chennai. This is its fifth delivery centre in India and the first outside Mumbai, taking the company's capacity to over 300,000 sq. ft. With its international headquarters in New York, Adventity has delivery centres in Houston and Dubai and offices in London, Hong Kong, Singapore and Seoul. Adventity, which currently employs over 4,000 professionals, will double its headcount over the next 18 months.

New JV for speciality cables

Polycab, a leader in the cable industry, has signed an agreement with global major Nexans to form a new joint venture, which will manufacture speciality cables. The initial phase of manufacturing is expected to commence in the first quarter of 2009. "Polycab's strong market presence in India and Nexans' technical expertise in cables, together would be a force to reckon with," says R.S. Vaidyanathan, CEO, Polycab Group.

NIIT to set up training centres in China

Leading information technology training firm NIIT has entered into an agreement with the Wuxi municipal government in China to set up IT training centres and offer programmes in the city. The IT training market in China is expected to grow at a 24 per cent CAGR in the next two years and considering China's goals in the IT outsourcing industry alone, there is a need to generate about five million software engineers by 2015.

IFC to focus on corporate governance reform

The IFC Global Corporate Governance Forum has, in consultation with the Securities Exchange Board of India and the National Institute of Securities Market, designed a programme to address key elements of corporate governance reform, capacity building, and enhance awareness in India.