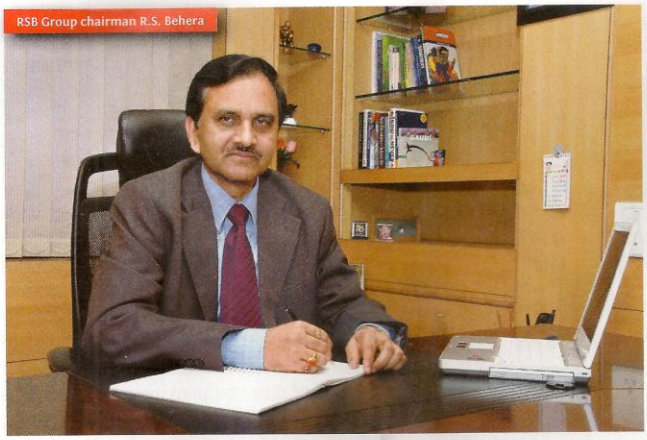
Another European JV

Close on the heels of acquiring a majority stake in Belgium company MSI, the 750-crore RSB Group is all set to ink another joint venture for the manufacture of tanker trailers

Story: Suhrid Barua


RSB Group chairman R.S. Behera

The 750-crore RSB Group will soon sign a joint venture with a European country for manufacture of tankers. Revealing this, RSB Group chairman R.S. Behera said the JV, which took some time in seeing the light of the day, will be in all probability a 51:49 partnership. 'We have been talking to our European partner since the beginning of 2008. But because of the economic slowdown, both of us did not pursue it but now with the economy fast on the recovery path, we decided to go ahead with the JV,' Behera said.

He said the European company would provide complete technical support. 'It will be a board managed company. Both parties would have a representative and we would be appointing a CEO for the same.'

Through the JV, RSB would manufacture tanks (mounted on rigid truck) and tanker trailer (mounted on articulated truck).

The company would be looking at manufacturing tankers at an area adjacent to the existing Jamshedpur plant or at Mumbai. RSB is looking at manufacturing 600 trailers annually from its proposed Mumbai plant. At present, RSB Group makes different types of trailers – skeletal trailer, flat bed, semi-flat bed, coil carrier, cement carrier and trailers with canopy. It also manufactures trailer components like kingpins and couplings.

The RSB Group has also been a prominent player in the manufacture of propeller shafts. The company is a market leader in making propeller shafts for the MCV and HCV segments. It caters to almost 90 percent of the propeller shaft requirements of Tata Motors - the country's largest CV maker. What makes RSB's propeller shafts stand out in the market is the sheer quantum of value-added features.

'Earlier, we used to have the 8-hole frictional face mounting coupling design which was higher in weight and was not able to handle field abuses (like overloading and bad road conditions). In this design, the torque was

transmitted through frictional force generated by bolt tightening and hence the problem of bolt loosening was encountered and necessitated frequent maintenance of the bolts. We replaced it with the serrated face mounting coupling design,' explains Behera.

And the new design has worked wonders with customers. 'This new design was lighter than the old design. Only four bolts are used, thereby reducing assembly time and cost of the bolts. Unlike the old design, here torque is not transmitted through frictional force generated by bolt tightening as torque transmission is positive through the serrations. This technology also minimises the hassles of bolt loosening and maintenance,' Behera illustrates.

What is more, the new design ensures lifetime greasing for the propeller shafts. 'It has a sliding joint with metallic dust cover and rilsan coated for higher wear resistance and higher life of the joint. The universal joints are fitted with improved multi lip seals, with synthetic grease for higher life of the propeller shafts. These value additions ensure life time greasing for zero maintenance of the shafts.' The new design was introduced in 2006 and it took two years customer understanding, testing, validation and acceptance of the design – before market acceptance was achieved.


View of the gear manufacturing

But despite being the market leaders (it has a market share is 60-65 percent) in offering propeller shafts for MCV and HCV segments, RSB is yet to venture into making the same for the LCV segment. 'For now, we would like to focus on our