

The Mumbai-headquartered Saint-Gobain Gyproc India Ltd, a player in the construction space, is part of the Saint-Gobain Group. The company is known for introduction of lightweight interior construction practices in the Indian construction industry. **Venkat Subramanian**, MD, Saint-Gobain Gyproc India, tells **Sandeep Menezes** that the company is keen to popularise the concept of plasterboard in tier-II and tier-III markets. Excerpts from the interview:

‘Our products can reduce the carbon footprint of any building’

What are the trends in India's building solutions service market? Is it technologically at par with those in Western nations?

Saint-Gobain Gyproc projects the global trend of dry-wall solutions and acoustic solutions in the interior construction space to soon become a norm in India. The buildings of the future will be taller, have more stringent fire safety requirements and need more acoustic comfort thus making traditional construction materials obsolete. These requirements are met by gypsum plasterboard-based drywall solutions, which are 8-10 times lighter than traditional masonry construction systems, 30-40 per cent faster to install, provide excellent fire rating and acoustics, and are 100 per cent recyclable. Over 80 per cent of all interior construction in the developed markets across all applications is with drywalls. We see great potential for drywalls and acoustic solutions in the Indian market too.

In the developed world, building solutions are fairly advanced from a performance point of view as the construction practices have evolved over a period of time. In India, construction practices are evolving and hence the use of advanced building systems focussed on performances like fire, acoustics and so



on is not very wide spread. But in terms of availability of these systems, they are very much at par with the rest of the world.

What was the aim behind the recent rechristening of your Indian operations?

The rechristening of India Gypsum into Saint-Gobain Gyproc India Limited has two broad purposes. India Gypsum was acquired by Saint-Gobain in early 2006 as part of the global acquisition of British Plasterboard (BPB), the previous owners of the business. Saint-Gobain is reputed the world over for its excel-

INTERVIEW



lent products and services and enjoys great equity. We are therefore proud to carry our new parentage into the name of the organisation.

Construction products are the core of Saint Gobain's global strategy and Gyproc is the leading business in the construction products sector. Our stated objective is to work on energy-efficient and environmentally friendly products for the construction markets. The Saint Gobain Gyproc business has a very large product portfolio apart from plasterboard and plasters that it acquired from BPB.

While India Gypsum has traditionally pioneered

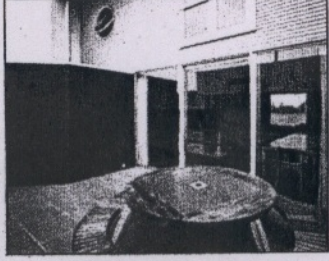
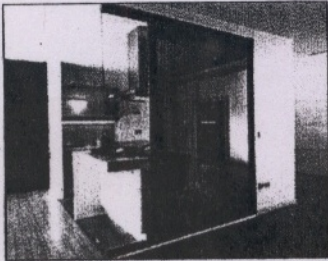
plasterboard use in ceilings particularly for the office segment, going forward the company wishes to provide tested products and solutions to meet the high performance, state-of-the-art requirements of the ceilings and drywalls markets across all segments of construction, leveraging the wealth of expertise that exist within the Saint-Gobain Group globally.

This is a milestone in the development of the plasterboard and dry construction industry in India and the new name - Saint-Gobain Gyproc India Limited heralds the arrival of advanced dry construction systems and solutions into India.

How do the drywall and ceiling solutions help architects in designing spaces?

The benefits include:

- 1) Lightweight systems - 8 to 10 times lighter than masonry systems
- 2) Faster construction - three to four times faster
- 3) Superior acoustics performance in terms of both absorption and insulation
- 4) Tested and certified systems to give between 1 and 4 hour fire rating
- 5) Smooth, aesthetic crack-free surfaces
- 6) Flexibility in dividing spaces



7) Green recyclable product

All these benefits packaged in one system is a rare combination and they give architects the flexibility in designing spaces of the future.

Does your product range fulfil green building norms?

Our entire gypsum plaster board, ceiling tiles and gypsum plaster range of products is approved by the CII-Godrej-GBC for consideration towards Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) points and can reduce the carbon footprint of any building.

Gypsum is used as plasterboard to create false ceilings and high performance drywalls and partitions. It is a 100 per cent recyclable material. The paper used in plasterboard is mostly sourced from paper mills that use waste recycled paper.

What is your future business strategy in India? Any new product or service on the cards?

Saint-Gobain Gyproc India has four manufacturing plants located in Jind (near Delhi), Wada (near Mumbai), Bangalore and Chennai, which are backed by a sales and distribution set up spread across the country. We would like to grow the market for plasterboard by

penetrating the drywalls category across segments like office, hotel, hospital, cinema, retail space, and industrial shed apart from ceilings for all of these and residential market. We are also keen to popularise the concept of plasterboard in tier-II and tier-III markets. Innovation is a key part of our marketing strategy and we plan to introduce new products and systems from our global basket regularly. We have recently launched the Ecophon range in the Indian market. Ecophon's mission is to contribute to a good working environment for the eye, the ear and the mind. We do this by supplying sound absorbing ceiling and wall systems with well devised functions and attractive design. Studies have shown that acoustically designed spaces can increase the overall productivity.

What are your future growth, expansion plans in India? What will be the source of funding?

We have already invested in plasterboard capacities ahead of market development and our current capacity should be able to see us through for the next few years.

We also keep evaluating options for growth in related businesses and the Saint-Gobain Group is willing to fund any investment that meets the investment philosophy and criterion of the group.

