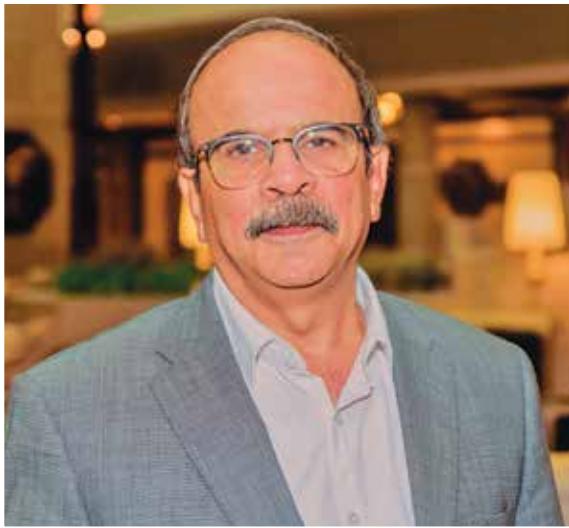


Vivek Chawla at the helm of Emami Paper Mills

“The newsprint slump has impacted us partially, but it was inevitable due to nationwide series of lock downs”



Mr. Vivek Chawla,
Wholetime Director & CEO,
Emami Paper Mills Ltd.

Mr. Vivek Chawla, newly appointed Whole-Time-Director and CEO, Emami Paper Mills Ltd reveals his priorities and future plans in an exclusive interview to Inpaper International Editorial Team. The excerpts of the interview are here:-

At the outset, Inpaper Editorial Team, congratulates you for your new appointment as Wholetime Director and CEO of Emami Paper Mills Ltd. How do you perceive your New Role as the CEO of Emami Paper Mills and what are your priorities?

I started my association with Emami Group under the visionary leadership of the promoters – Shri R S Aggarwal ji and Shri R S Goenka ji, the founders of the Group. The group is now being spearheaded by the second generation. Shri Aditya Aggarwal ji and Shri Manish Goenka ji are providing their dynamic and able leadership to Emami Agro and Emami Paper business. I held the position of Wholetime Director and CEO at Emami Cement Ltd. for more than four years with Aditya Ji and Manish Ji at the helm. We after commencing our sales, built our brand in a crowded cement market and grew the company to a sales of 6 million tons per annum in just four years. I was subsequently presented with this incredible opportunity to work with Emami Paper Mills Limited and I whole heartedly accepted. On visiting the manufacturing

plant and meeting the team of Emami Paper Mills, I am personally very excited and thrilled on embarking upon this new journey. The paper industry has its own challenges and I am confident that we can make a difference and create opportunities from the challenges that we face. I look forward to working with the team and am excited to work with the Indian paper industry.

Covid pandemic is creating havoc in paper Industry and dragging the performance of the industry to its bottom line. What is your road map to bring back Emami Paper Mills to its Pre-covid levels?

As a result of our extraordinary efforts in the packaging board segment, we were able to limit the impact of Covid Pandemic on our operations both during the first and second wave. Our packaging board plant, apart from first few days of the initial lock down period in 2020, has been running to its full capacity. We were the first mill in India to start production and overcome various challenges to give seamless service while ensuring delivery of packaging board to the essential commodity segment

like Pharma, FMCG, Food, etc. In short, through proper planning and product portfolio development, we have minimized the impact of Covid on our ultra-modern Board Mill resulting in handsome capacity utilization.

On the other hand, the newsprint, writing, and printing paper segment has been seriously impacted. The newsprint requirement, though consistently diminishing, of all leading newspapers was fulfilled by us under severe logistic constraints. Our endeavor to make kraft paper as an additional product in our product basket helped us to become fungible as per market dynamics. We are also working on some niche segment product development. We hope that by the end of second quarter of current financial year, we will be back to pre covid level in volumes in the writing & printing segment.

How is the slump in the sale of newsprint impacting the company? How are the other segments doing?

The newsprint slump has impacted us partially, but it was inevitable due to nationwide series of lock downs. The circulation level drop and advertisement drop has reduced the number of pages which in turn has created lower consumption level of newsprint. It also created a shortage of old news print both domestic as well as imported which is our raw material. It is never the less a temporary phenomenon and in due course market will be back to its original level. Writing and Printing Paper demand is also seriously affected as there is absolutely no visibility regarding the opening of schools, colleges, conducting physical examination etc.

How is the capacity utilization now? Are you planning any investment for expansion?

All the mills presently are being utilized to full capacity since we have



View of Emami Paper Mills

been able to change our product portfolio mix in line with the market demand. We will announce capacity expansion at an appropriate time though we have committed some CAPEX for product quality improvement. I will like to add that we hold quality in very high esteem in our organization and as a result our product is recognized internationally and is comparable to best global standards.

How are the raw material prices impacting the company's bottom line?

The steep increase in the raw material prices is having an adverse impact on us. This has been compounded by the fact that the supply chain is also under severe strain with challenges being faced from the shipping industry as well as the worldwide lockdown. The higher cost of raw materials has impacted us, however, we have taken concrete steps to mitigate the increase in raw material prices, through various cost saving initiatives.

Do you propose any change in Emami Paper Mills Operations to make the company more agile?

We have an experienced and very knowledge team with us. To my understanding, improvement in efficiency and other parameters, is a continuous process. We strongly believe that potential for improvement in any area is limitless. We are making renewed efforts to rejuvenate the team post the pandemic and bring about a renewed focus on our shared goal. We are encouraging team members to come up with innovative ideas during structured brain storming sessions where we agree on plans to achieve goals. The plans that we make must get implemented. It is pertinent to note here that an efficient and effective execution includes the ability to use time and available resources in a focused and result oriented manner.

Thus, it is critical to continuously streamline our business operations, increase efficiency and improve productivity, which eventually helps in gaining a competitive edge in the marketplace

Do you see any threat to Newsprint production in the country due to rapid digitalization in print and publishing segment of the industry?

Newsprint in India may not come under immediate threat because of the popularity of vernacular dailies in the hinterland which drives demand for newsprint. However, the fact that digitization is posing a challenge for the paper industry cannot be denied and hence it is important that we look for areas/ segments which would not get affected by digitization, for example packaging board, tissue papers, etc. which would create better opportunities. We at Emami Paper are well prepared to take on these challenges and convert them into opportunities.

