

Sophie Moochhala
Managing Director

A One-Stop Solution for Instrumentation Needs

For over 43 years, Fluid Controls Private Limited has been offering product customization and solutions to suit specific applications and client requirements and now the focus shifts to thrive amid the government's push for Atmanirbhar Bharat. "We are a "Vocal for Local" MSME and we whole-heartedly support the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. Domestic manufacturers have the capability – be it in manufacturing, quality, and R&D – to cater to domestic requirements across sectors. In the past, legacy international vendors and lack of firm procurement policies constrained the effective implementation of "Make in India". Atmanirbhar Bharat, which clearly outlines procurement policies, will go a long way to boost domestic manufacturers, especially in the MSME sector. With our enhanced manufacturing and R&D capabilities, Fluid Controls® can contribute immensely to provide high quality, high-performance products to all sectors in the move to localize supplies," said Sophie Moochhala, Managing Director, Fluid Controls Private Limited. Speaking to Aeromag in an interview, she talks about the company's future plans.

▶ Over the last four and a half decades, Fluid Controls has made its footprints in the industry as a leading provider of instrumentation products and services for a wide variety of industrial applications including the defence. What are the major milestones in this journey of success?

Since its inception in 1974, the Mumbai-headquartered Fluid Controls® ethos has been of research and development offering 'Make in India' products and solutions. The major milestones we have achieved in our journey include approvals of our critical applications in nuclear, oil/gas, thermal power, defence and railway brake piping industries; recognition as an "In-House R&D Center" by the Department of Scientific & Industrial Research (Govt. of India); and the set-up of a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility at Chakan, Pune with an advanced R&D center and testing laboratory.

As a testimonial of our success, Fluid Controls® has been awarded CII Industrial Innovation Award for medium scale manufacturing organizations and has been recognised as one of the Top 25 Innovative Companies of the Year at the Indian R&D Ecosystem Conclave 2019. Other recognitions include the "Top 10 Urban Infra Solution Provider of Year" by Urban Transport News and the award for "Excellence in Technical Innovation" by ISA Maharashtra Section at PPA Meet 2020.

▶ The defence manufacturing in India is thriving now more than ever and you have been focusing on defence sector with a wide-range of supplies to critical defence machinery. How strong is the company's defence business and who all are the major clients?

Since 2000, Fluid Controls® has been a supplier for many Indian defence projects including the redesign of the Akash Air Storage Vehicle (ASV) under the auspices of Research & Development Establishment (Engrs).

The Akash Weapons System employs sub systems which need high pressure compressed air up to 400 bar. Fluid Controls® re-designed the existing Air Storage Vehicle (ASV) and delivered a prototype to R&D. The system was installed on the ASV and successfully tested for 600 bar hydrostatic and 400 bar pneumatic pressure.

We have been supplying to Defence Machinery Development Establishment (DMDE) the valves for compressed air systems in submarines. Fluid Controls® has supplied Kirloskar Brothers Limited a range of specially designed Low Pressure Loss Throttle Valves and Non-Return Valves for the Water Mist System in submarines.

▶ Fluids Controls offers customized solutions to clients based on analytical formulations, 2D and 3D Modelling & Finite Element Analysis and you have a state-of-the-art R&D facility in Pune. Could you elaborate on this?

At Fluid Controls, we have four and a half decades of focus on design for customer needs and product performance. The Fluid Controls® objective has been to design, develop and deliver high quality, high-performance connectors, valves and instrumentation products that could cater to the needs of our customers. Adopting a "Design for Six Sigma" approach, all products designed by Fluid Controls Private Limited are developed from First Principles. Each design is 2D and 3D modeled and validated using the latest software and FEA. Our innovation and process-focused team constantly challenges our existing product portfolio and provides customized solutions for clients.

In keeping with this vision, we have focused on investing in R&D talent, equipment and modelling software. Today, we have a DSIR approved R&D Center at Pune, INDIA which houses a design laboratory with over 25 designers and product specialists, the latest design software and a state-of-the-art testing and metrology laboratory. Our R&D capabilities enable us to constantly upgrade existing products and also offer customers customized product solutions.

▶ Besides defence, Fluid Control has been a premier supplier to onshore and off-shore oil and gas installations, process and power plants and railways in India. Please shed some light onto these businesses?

Fluid Controls® is a premier supplier to onshore and off-shore oil & gas installations, process and thermal power plants, critical applications for nuclear plants, and brake piping applications for rail and metro. We are approved by all major Indian OEMs such as ONGC, IOCL, BPCL, HPCL, NTPC, BHEL, NPCIL and railway OEMs and have a demonstrated capability for executing large project orders. With our composite expertise of manufacturing connectors, our understanding of tube and end connector performance and our decades of experience of swaging and accurate tube bending, Fluid Controls® now offers customers complete end-to-end engineered supply and installation solutions for piping – both on-site and prefabricated.

▶ The COVID-19 has affected the industrial production largely and many players in the market are struggling for the recovery. How has the pandemic affected your company and what arrangement have you taken to function smoothly amid COVID-19?

Given the project nature of our business, we continue to receive orders as there is activity in the infrastructure segment which constitutes our business. At Fluid Controls®, we "Engineer Connections Everyday". During the COVID-19 situation we are in today, we are committed to staying safe every day and has been ensuring business continuity as well as the health and safety of our employees, their families, our customers, and our business partners. With a systems and process focused approach, we have restructured our operations and have put in place detailed guidelines for operations and conducted extensive training of our employees.

The core of our EPRP Protocol is the "Fluid Controls Focus Five" to ensure safe working (https://fluidcontrols.com/pdf/FC-Covid-Response-Manual.pdf). We have also re-structured our facilities and offices to ensure compliance with government's COVID-19 guidelines and have modified our manufacturing processes to ensure safe production and inward and outward material handling. In addition, all our employees are provided with individual PPE kits which are tailor made for their area of operation and have been provided with adequate insurance. As a responsible citizen, Fluid Controls® has also reached out to the wider community and have extended support to NGOs such as UnLtd India, OSCAR Foundation, Masoom and Goonj who are involved with COVID Relief Work.

▶ After Make in India, the central government is now pushing the idea of Atmanirbhar Bharat for boosting domestic production to reduce imports. What role could Fluid Controls play in this regard?

Fluid Controls® is a "Vocal for Local" MSME organization and we whole-heartedly support the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative. Domestic manufacturers have the capability – be it in manufacturing, quality, and R&D – to cater to domestic requirements across sectors. In the past, legacy international vendors and lack of firm procurement policies constrained the effective implementation of "Make in India". Atmanirbhar Bharat, which clearly outlines procurement policies, will go a long way to boost domestic manufacturers, especially in the MSME sector. With our manufacturing and R&D capabilities, Fluid Controls® can contribute immensely to provide high quality, high-performance products to all sectors in the move to localise supplies.

▶ What is the roadmap ahead for Fluid Controls and what are the objectives for the next five years? Also, how competitive is the Indian market compared to that of international one?

The Indian market undoubtedly offers a competitive environment. We move towards focusing on quality, price and performance, companies who invest in people, infrastructure and our R&D have a clear competitive edge.

The roadmap for Fluid Controls® is that we will continue to enhance our manufacturing, R&D and service capabilities. Last month, we set up two new areas within our plant for tube forming and hose crimping and testing. We have also recently won big contracts for site installation of brake pipe lines for railway coaches. We are also focusing on the defence sector and on expanding our international supplies – for example we have a ToT and manufacturing agreement for Saudi Arabia. ■

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ENGINEERING CONNECTIONS EVERYDAY