

INTERVIEW: YS MAYYA

CMD, ELECTRONICS CORPORATION OF INDIA LTD

Indigenous technologies have to be preserved at all costs

The Hyderabad-based public sector giant, Electronics Corporation of India Ltd is in revamp mode as it aspires to play a significant role in the country's defence, nuclear, homeland security and information security sectors. ECIL has a well laid out road map towards this goal, says its chief executive YS Mayya. An outstanding scientist, he pioneered the development and deployment of distributed systems in nuclear reactors and allied plants at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC). He led design efforts for the realisation of computer controlled servo systems for the giant metre wave radio telescope array, vehicle mounted UAV trackers, antenna control servo system for the 32 metre deep space network antenna of Chandrayaan-1 programme, among others. Under his leadership, ECIL has followed a policy of rational mix of indigenous development and licensed manufacturing. "But self-reliance remains the guiding principle," he tells BV Mahalakshmi in a recent interaction. Excerpts:

Tell us about some of the new technologies being developed by ECIL?

We are in the forefront of providing technology solutions to benefit society at large. One of the firsts of ECIL was the solid state television, apart from the solid state cockpit voice recorder and Earth station antenna and 32M antenna for Moon mission project—Chandrayaan. The recent ones are the electronic voting machines and pipeline inspection gauge for petroleum pipelines, besides the integrated security system for the Parliament House.

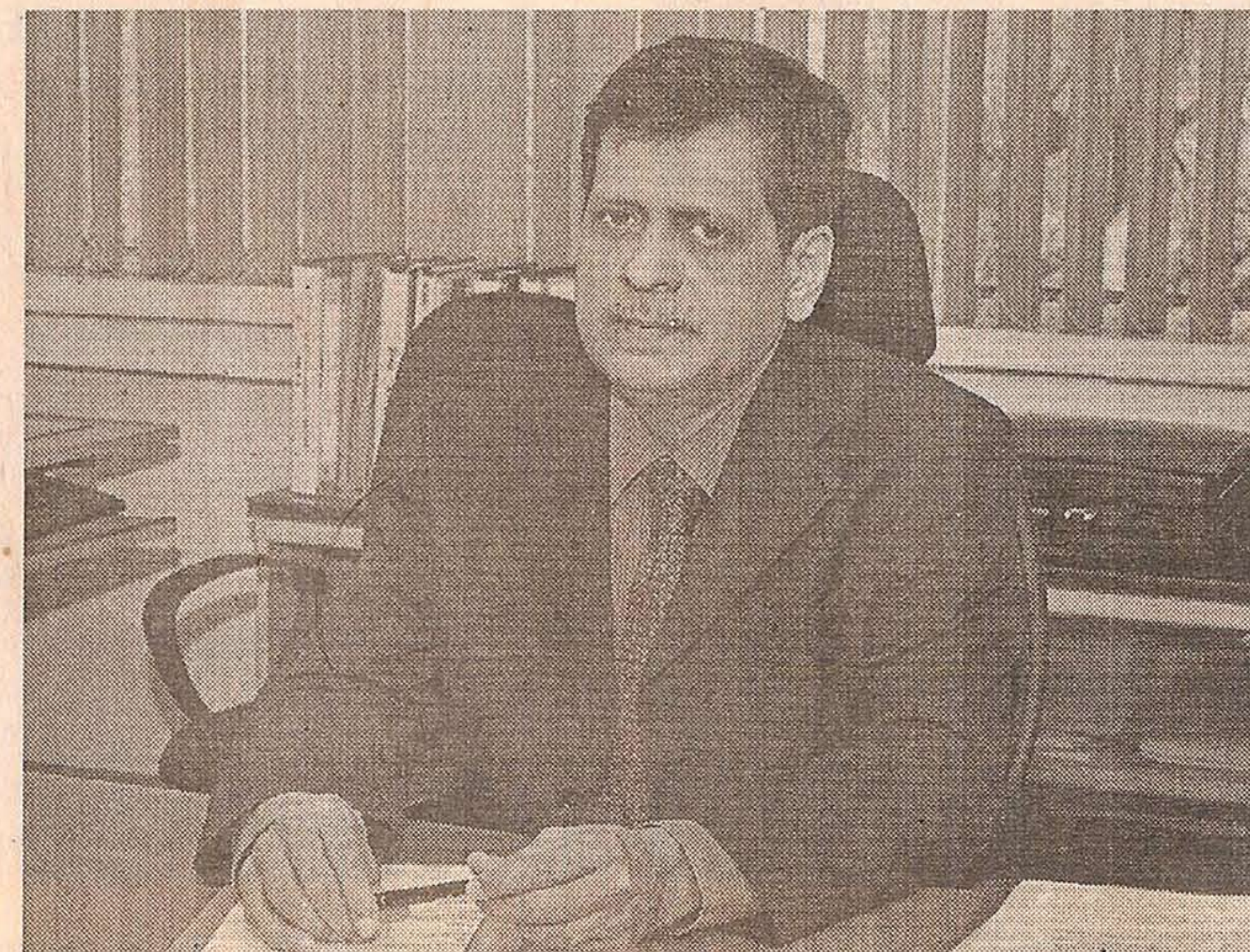
ECIL is a consortium partner in the National Population Register (NPR) Project and Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) of government of India. We have pioneered the introduction of electronic voting machines (EVM) which have revolutionised the electoral

process in India. We have integrated mobile medical vans with tele-radiography equipment using satellite-based communication links to bring specialty diagnostics and healthcare to rural India. Our hospital management software systems have been deployed in cancer hospitals. Wireless networks is the technology to watch; however real concerns on availability, jamming and security remain to be addressed satisfactorily.

How is ECIL increasing value addition in defence and security sectors through increased localisation?

ECIL has followed a policy of rational mix of indigenous development and licensed manufacturing. While our technologies in the nuclear sector are completely homegrown, we are pursuing opportunities for localisation of instrumentation for imported reactors. This also is opening up export opportunities. In the defence sector, we are actively pursuing offset opportunities. Self-reliance remains the guiding principle. In our programmes to develop our own products with Indian intellectual property (IP), we leverage our linkage with national laboratories—DAE, DRDO, ISRO—and academic institutions.

There are huge opportunities in the domestic market for design knowhow in the country. Sensing these opportunities, we are also in talks with foreign



companies who are setting up projects in India for designing and manufacturing. Our major thrust is to develop high speed network products with indigenous content. In the process, our R&D vision include development of our own products having Indian IP and position the company as a total solution provider in electronics. Besides, we are also increasing value addition and market share in defence and security sectors

through increased localisation.

However, the gradual demise of domestic industries in the area of components, telecommunication, computers and entertainment electronics should be an eye opener. Indigenous technologies have to be preserved at all costs. It is easy to loose these gradually to the dazzle of imported technologies, as surely these are expected to enter the Indian scene. We are looking at more opportu-

nities on bigger projects and expect to receive orders for radiological detector equipment for major ports, surveillance system, artillery fuzes for nuclear power plants and other technologies for missile programmes.

What are your plans to increase the share of Indian make products?

In the process of innovation, one should be cautious on brand tags such as 'made in India' and 'Indian make'. It is of immense importance to increase innovation among entrepreneurs and bring in policy for revival of designing and product know how. While pursuing opportunities for increased manufacturing of electronics in India, it is also very important to encourage Indian designs and Indian ownership of intellectual property. This is important from strategic as well as commercial perspective. We can certainly exploit our large market size to develop, acquire and assimilate technologies.

ECIL has a well laid out road map towards this goal and welcomes the recent policy initiatives taken in this regard. The strategic role of electronics is not limited to defence, nuclear or aerospace sectors; vital national infrastructures depend on electronics to function. It is evident that dependency on black box technologies exposes to new vulnerabilities and threats in the form of malware,

restrictive IPR regimes, unpredictable licensing policy, high obsolescence rate and proliferation politics. These pose renewed opportunities and myriad challenges for ECIL in this rapidly globalising world.

What are the measures undertaken to position the PSU as a supplier of strategic technology?

We have an order book size of ₹2,000 crore as of January 2012 compared to ₹1,490 crore at the beginning of 2010-11. We have inaugurated Compact Antenna Test Facility (CATF), ECIL is now equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure for characterisation and testing of antennas. The year 2011-12 has been a definitive year for ECIL with net sales exceeding our target of ₹1,340 crore and successful closing of many projects. Also a definite progress was made in the colossal exercise of data digitisation for NPR project and launching of nationwide campaign for SECC—two prestigious projects where national aspirations are linked to our performance. Our concerted efforts are expected to result in additional orders in the near future for security and surveillance, stabilised platforms and Satcom terminals. These trends will continue and we must enhance our value addition in these projects. Towards this end, we have introduced many new indigenous products such as radiation detectors, new EVM, PLCs, routers, encryption products—to name a few.

How is design concept evolving in the electronics industry?

Business challenges are continuously increasing and there is an urgent need to increase both bottomline and topline. This is possible by advanced in-house R&D, collaboration with national R&D laboratories and technology tie up with international players.

The Financial Express

ECIL adds new feature to voting machine

HYDERABAD: When a vote is cast on an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), the voter is not sure whether his preference is recorded in favour of his choice of candidate, as the machine simply records the vote but does not display the choice.

This deficiency often gave rise to apprehensions of pos-

sibility of rigging as also suspicion among voters whether the votes were being added to their choice of candidates. But now the Electronic Corporation of India (ECIL) is adding a facility, which would address these issues.

The ECIL authorities have now added a new unit named "Voter Verifiable Paper Audit

Trail Unit" (VVPAT), which is a sort of printer facility, added to the Ballot Unit.

After the vote is cast by pressing the button on BU, the facility will now display the candidate serial number and his party symbol (in whose favour the vote is cast), on its LCD panel for a few seconds.

The Hindu