

Advanced safety solutions can help reduce machine downtime

— **Ramji Singh**, Vice President
— Sales & Marketing, Schmersal India



*Schmersal Group, an international market leader in the field of machine safety, entered India in 2007 and by 2013, it had its own manufacturing facility. In 2018, it even set up its global IT centre in India, which is the company's first such outside Germany. We have **Ramji Singh** expressing his confidence in Schmersal's growth in India, thanks to rising awareness of machine safety. Singh observes that engineers in India are realizing that advanced safety solutions can indeed help reduce machine downtime and increase productivity.*

We understand that Schmersal specializes in safety switches. Please give us a brief orientation.

Schmersal Group is at the forefront of expertise and one of the international market leaders in the field of machine safety. With the world's most comprehensive range of safety switchgear products, the Schmersal Group develops safety

systems and safety solutions for special requirements in a variety of user industries, such as the textile industry, mining and bulk goods industries, but also in the pharma, food and beverage as well as in the packaging, machine tool, automotive, lift and elevator industry. For the past few years, our company has been working

hard on its strategy to establish the Schmersal Group as the world's leading systems and solutions provider. Our customers are increasingly looking for end-to-end solutions for all issues related to machine safety and occupational health and safety.

In light of this trend, we now not only offer complex, individually configurable safety systems, we have also embedded these systems into a comprehensive package of services, which have been bundled under our independent business division tec.nicum. The experts at tec.nicum implement all sorts of safety-related projects for their customers – from manufacturer-neutral consultancy and the analysis of the status quo through planning and documentation to the final handover of the finished, norm-compliant machine.

Tell us about the customization of Schmersal's global products for the Indian market.

Our aim is to provide our customers



The Schmersal factory in Ranjangaon started production in July 2013.



The solenoid interlock AZM400 has an unmatched clamping force of 10,000 Newton. The combination of electronics and sensors in this interlock represents a very high level of safety and at the same time helps to reduce machine downtimes.

with newest technology features and cost-effective solutions in the competitive Indian market. In India, we have our own R&D team to develop solutions that adapt to the specific requirements of the Indian market – and which are produced locally true to the motto “Make in India”. At the same time, high quality standards are of utmost importance for Schmersal. It is a company policy that all production subsidiaries of the Schmersal Group worldwide work on the basis of the same quality management system. That means that we have consistent processes everywhere and the same quality rules – no matter if it is our plant in Ranjangaon or our lead plant at Schmersal’s headquarters in Germany. Also, Schmersal provides services as well as solutions to its Indian customers. For instance, the experts of our tec.nicum division provide services in risk assessment on machines and identify the possible hazards.

Please tell us more about the Ranjangaon manufacturing facility, and the free trade warehousing zone within the complex.

Schmersal is the only company to have a safety product manufacturing plant in India. Our world-class production facility has a production space of 3,000 sqm, where we manufacture safety and electromechanical products. Our factory started production in July 2013 and today has a headcount of about 90 trained and qualified employees. We produce for the local market as well as export to the Schmersal Group from our 100% export-oriented unit (EOU) located within our Indian factory for duty-free manufacturing. We have set up a free trade and warehousing zone (FTWZ) near Mumbai, which is specifically for global Indian companies who are allowed to import goods at a special concessional duty.

Schmersal recently inaugurated its global IT centre at Ranjangaon.

Tell us more on the scope of its activities.

India has been recognized as one of the competence centers with skilled resources to provide support for SAP implementation and software development to the entire Schmersal Group, including the headquarters in Germany. It is the first global support activity that has been established outside Germany. We commissioned our IT center in spring 2108. This activity has also led to increased employment opportunities for Indians. We hired 12 IT-specialists (SAP). Today, the global IT centre spreads across an area of 3305 sqft with a workforce of 15 functional and technical consultants.

We understand that Schmersal started manufacturing operations at the Ranjangaon facility in 2013. What is the current capacity and what have been recent annual production levels?

Actually, Schmersal India Pvd. Ltd. was already established in 2007



The PROTECT PSC1 from Schmersal is a programmable, modular safety controller. In combination with an integrated OPC UA server it is an Industry 4.0-compliant safety solution.

as a sales organization in order to participate in the growing Indian market for machine safety. In 2012, the cornerstone for a production factory was laid in Ranjangaon. The constant rise in demand for Schmersal products was the main factor behind the decision to invest in our own factory, especially as it became apparent that the Indian market offers massive potential for the years to come. By the end of 2017, the Indian factory manufactured and supplied more than one million safety switches to the Indian market. The current manufacturing capacity is five million safety switches per year.

What is the extent of localization of the Ranjangaon manufacturing plant? Also, do you foresee capacity expansion in the near future?

In recent years we have experienced tremendous growth in sales from our Indian plant that sometimes exceeded 20 per cent. In 2018 our Indian operation achieved a turnover of Euro 6.2 million. We are expecting further growth rates in the years to come. We focus our business activities on industry verticals, regional focus and more sales power throughout the country. So, as a long-term perspective a further expansion in production and employment is to be expected.

What are the major sectors to which Schmersal caters to in India?

Basically, we supply to the manufacturer of machines and the users of machines. Among the latter, we have customers in a wide range of segments – from heavy industry such as steel, mining or bulk handling to textile industry up to the food and beverage or pharmaceutical industries. In many industries a growing usage of automation and robotic technology is the dominating trend. We at Schmersal are sensing tremendous opportunity in the automation segment and are committed to addressing the safety aspect. For robot workstations, for



Schmersal has developed and produces an extensive range of coordinated safety components and safety systems for industrial robots.

example, we are meanwhile able to offer integrated safety solutions, including safety fences and tailor-made safety devices.

What is your outlook on the Indian market, and what would you consider as your principal business growth drivers?

The market for machine safety and safety solutions is moving ahead at an extremely rapid pace. One important reason for this development is the fact that awareness around the benefits of machine safety has increased. For example, BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) has recently decided to adopt the ISO standards. For two reasons: one, employees in India will benefit from improved safety standards and, two, it will facilitate immensely the import and export of machines to and from India.

International standards and global safety norms have propelled Indian companies to augment their safety initiatives. In today's connected age, safety and design engineers in Indian companies are constantly in touch with their global counterparts. They are updated on the safety practices and policies followed globally and feel necessary to have similar practices here in India. Especially the customers of Schmersal will benefit from the introduction of the ISO Standards in India because all Schmersal products already comply with the ISO standards. This means that when our customers buy our products, they can be sure that these components are 100 per cent compliant with the new Indian norms – at no extra cost involved. Another growth driver for the Indian market is that more and more engineers recognize that safety solutions do not hamper productivity. On the contrary: advanced safety solutions can help to reduce downtime of machines and to increase productivity. So, our view of the future is very optimistic! ■