

C&MD's Message on the occasion of 155th Foundation Day – 1st February 2021

My Dear Colleagues,

You would agree with me that 154 years in business is a formidable number by any count, anywhere in the world! This itself should fill us with pride and propel us to go the extra mile to keep moving forward in this remarkable journey and grow in strength. As we share the joy and pride of celebrating the 155th Foundation Day of our Company, we mustn't forget that the world around us is still sombre, owing to COVID-19; though the launch of the vaccine is a harbinger of hope. On the occasion of the Foundation Day, while we pay homage to our founding fathers, I would like to thank each one of you, who has been holding fort and demonstrating resilience in these trying times.

At Balmer Lawrie, we have been together in our fight against the pandemic. We proactively took all the initiatives to contain the spread of COVID-19 and also deal with it. We contributed to the PM-CARES fund and organised mass distribution of hand sanitisers and masks in the communities residing in and around our units / establishments. In spite of the various challenges, we managed to make profits in the second quarter as compared to the previous quarter of FY2020-21. The Foundation Day is an occasion to cherish our accomplishments. I feel happy to state that our Industrial Packaging (IP) plant at Taloja, Navi Mumbai won the Gold in the India Green Manufacturing Challenge 2019-20 organised by International Research Institute for Manufacturing, India. We took a strategic decision of moving all the SBU / Function teams in the Northern Region under one roof in the wonderful facility at the NBCC Centre at Okhla, Phase 1, New Delhi. We undertook some significant CSR and HSE initiatives across the country during the year. As part of the ongoing "Capacity Building on Health & Hygiene – Education" project in Saily and Khadoli villages at Silvassa, activities for the children were conducted at their homes owing to COVID-19 and recently we sponsored a Cardiac Ambulance for the people of Silvassa. We have also successfully published the Business Responsibility Report [BRR] and Sustainability Report for one more year.

Year 2020 reminds us of a functionality called 'fast forward' in electronic entertainment gadgets of our days. Humanity has not seen anything of comparable scale earlier, that has impacted lives of millions and is still impairing lives of many more. One has to take note of the wanton destruction of economies across the globe to get a sense of the might of the Coronavirus. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) had projected a deep recession in 2020, the steepest slowdown since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Global growth was projected to be -4.4%. In 2021, growth is projected to rebound to 5.2% but would remain below 2019 levels even next year. A growing economy like ours tanked by about 23% last quarter. These are testing times for everyone and we must take inspiration from the fact that we continue to be actively engaged in our economy ever since the first lockdown was partially withdrawn. We must prove our worth in shouldering this enormous responsibility of keeping our businesses in full traction. This is a time when we should value introspection, empathy, spirited teamwork and innovation to create new opportunities for our businesses. At the same time, we need to nurture and take forward our culture, legacy, values and traditions.

Under the strong leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, the Government is constantly looking at unlocking value in the economy. PSUs continue to be a bellwether in India's economy; however, the changing business environment and the debilitating financial impact of the pandemic may encourage the Government to hasten its disinvestment strategies. In the US, Biden presidency may open up new opportunities and help ease global tensions in trade and commerce. Overall, an interesting time ahead of us and we need to stay focused, nimble and positive to take advantage of situations unfolding in the near to medium term.

My best wishes to all of you and your family!

Adika Ratna Sekhar