

New role for Royal Enfield's old facility in Chennai

Tiruvottiyur unit vital in shaping operations at Oragadam facility, says MD

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For nearly six decades now, Tiruvottiyur has been home to Royal Enfield. Not any longer. It will now have to share the spotlight with Oragadam, again near Chennai, the company's second facility, which was inaugurated last week.

How will Enfield balance its two worlds, one which is distinctly new and the other a legacy from the 1950s?

Siddhartha Lal, the Managing Director & CEO of Eicher Motors, which owns the iconic brand, reiterates that Tiruvottiyur is as intrinsic to the business as Oragadam will be.

"There is absolutely nothing in this kind of (old versus new) perception because no company, in my head, can make two different qualities. We are investing tremendously in Tiru-

vottiyur to upgrade it to becoming the engine hub for our company," he told *Business Line*.

According to Lal, the types of skilled people at this plant are perfectly suited for this task.

The new engine shop there is "as amazing as the one here in Oragadam" and modern with top-class machines from Japan.

"We are upgrading Tiruvottiyur to a totally different level. It is actually very complementary to Oragadam," Lal says. The learnings there came in handy while readying this new facility. "Tiruvottiyur is a tiny plant, a legacy plant. Whatever is remaining, you can fill up that space," he explains.

Being a "running facility", it is virtually impossible to take out a paint shop and put in a



Siddhartha Lal, MD and CEO, Eicher Motors Ltd.

new one. The layout of the plant is also "all over the place because it is groomed organically".

In Oragadam, on the contrary, the company can plan a layout for 500,000 units in different phases.

"Most of the learnings on this new assembly line were first implemented in Tiruvottiyur because we went through the entire engineering," Lal says.

This is when Enfield tried them out on a live motorcycle to see how well they worked before bringing them to Oragadam. Lal believes there has been a lot of cross-learning in this exercise while critical inputs have also come in from Volvo-Eicher, the truck joint venture.

"We got their support on issues like layout, automation, etc. The learnings have come in from everywhere," he adds. Being a single assembly line, Oragadam gives Enfield a far more flexible approach to manufacturing.

However, what is more significant is the extent of retooling done for

critical parts.

As Lal puts it, a bike literally starts with the frame and even if it is not "millimetre perfect", there will be difficulties fitting in other components.

"We retooled the frame so that it is the best quality. We have also tooled up all our tanks, mudguards and side panels at very precise levels," he says. All these initiatives are also heading back to Tiruvottiyur, which only reinforces the fact that it will continue to be a strategic facility.

Oragadam, on its part, will give Royal Enfield an opportunity to upgrade itself to top-class levels in manufacturing. "From here, we can up our ambition levels where we want to be global leaders in mid-size motorcycles," Lal says.

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