

The NeST Group

- NeST is at the forefront of Industry 4.0, aiming to transform Kerala into a global electronics manufacturing powerhouse

Hi-Tek Park Electronics Division 2 of SFO Technologies in Kochi.



Where the world comes to NeST

A whirlwind of activity surrounds N Jehangir, yet he remains a picture of calm as electronic products, destined for far-flung corners of the globe, stream out of his company.

Seated in his unassuming office in Kochi, the Chairman and Managing Director of the NeST Group exudes warmth, even as he effortlessly navigates a constant barrage of challenges. There's an understated elegance about the man, his workspace and his work ethic.

"Challenges keep me going. They are perhaps the greatest motivation," he says with a smile.

More than 7,000 dedicated employees power NeST, the Kochi-headquartered conglomerate. Manufacturing over 1,000 sub-assemblies and HLA's (High Level Assemblies) from 20,000+ components for fortune 500 OEMs across the globe, this home-grown brand exports 85 per cent of its output to 56 countries. To serve its diverse customer base, NeST has established development centres, factories and front-end offices in over 32 locations across the U.S., Europe, the Middle East, the Southeast Asia, Japan, Australia and India.

From its humble beginnings as a single manufacturing plant in 1990, the group has evolved into a diversified global powerhouse, driving innovation across Electronics Manufacturing Services (EMS), Original Design Manufacturing (ODM), Software Development, Application Development and Management (ADM), consulting, education and training, and food and beverages.

NeST, through its flagship company, SFO (established in 1990), revolutionised the industry with the pioneering concept of ODM Plus solutions. Far surpassing the traditional Original Design Manufacturing (ODM) model, this approach extends holistic solutions tailored to meet unique requirements for industries such as aerospace and defence, space, communications, energy and industrial, healthcare and transportation.

SFO has evolved from EMS to ODM and now leads the way with ODM Plus services. This enhanced offering integrates SFO's own intellectual property (IP), pre-built product components, expertise in IoT, analytics and mobility, artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, related technologies like GIS (Geographic Information System), enterprise solutions, and data warehousing and business intelligence. This comprehensive suite provides significant value-added benefits to OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer), cementing the company's position as a frontrunner in the industry 4.0 era.

Javad K Hassan, an alumnus of the University of Kerala and Columbia University, and his younger brother Jehangir together laid initial foundation for NeST. Having held prominent positions at IBM and AMP, Hassan was instrumental in driving innovation in



Althaf Jehangir, Executive Director & CEO, Manufacturing Business

semiconductor technology, securing over 20 patents. He later expanded AMP's operations into fibre-optics and wireless technologies, contributing to its growth into a multi-billion-dollar enterprise.

IPO on the cards

NeST is gearing up for an Initial Public Offering (IPO) to fuel a major expansion. The ambitious plan involves backward integration with a PCB manufacturing facility, the development and manufacturing of 3D Printing Solutions, Assembly-Testing- Packaging Plant for Storage Devices, besides Automated Tools and Testing Equipment for the Semiconductor and other Manufacturing industries.

"Up until now, we've been self-funded, reinvesting our resources to drive our growth.

With an IPO, we now aim to take our business to the next level. Just as a tree branches out to reach for the sky, we aspire to expand our operations and seize emerging opportunities. Fresh capital infusion is crucial. Going public will strengthen our brand recognition and forge deeper connections with our stakeholders," says Jehangir.

Jehangir has infused new energy into the management team. His two children, Althaf Jehangir and Nazneen Jehangir, accomplished engineers from prestigious institutions, have been serving over a decade as Executive Directors and CEOs, steering the business of SFO and NeST Digital with excellence. "They are supporting as my right and left hands, and the future of the NeST group is fully



Nazneen Jehangir, Executive Director & CEO, NeST Digital

secure in their exceptional leadership," says Jehangir.

NeST boasts a significant manufacturing footprint, primarily in Kerala. Among the diversified expansions include a 2.5 lakh sq ft Hi-Tek Park-Electronic Division II in Kochi's Special Economic Zone, which has emerged as a hub for advanced high-volume electronics manufacturing. With an additional 2.5 lakh square feet under construction and plans for another 5 lakh square feet, NeST's commitment to growth is evident. The 40,000 square feet Component Park in Kochi houses a state-of-the-art Latching Relay facility for energy meters and power applications, a Magnetics Division and a Component Division specialising in Fibre Optic Components.

Beyond Kerala, NeST operates key facilities in Bangalore, Mysore and Pune focussing on Sheet Metal, Plastics, Machining, Cable & Wireharness, Electronics and HLA.

"NeST has been offering a unique value proposition for our customers. We are the only ODM Service Provider in India to offer full spectrum competencies to customers under one roof. Our offerings include sheet metal, injection moulding, machining, tool room, cable & wireharness, magnetics, latching relays, PCBA, RF & wireless, power electronics, along with industrial design, hardware & software engineering, VA/VE, NPI and HLA. We also support Build to Spec. and Build to Print models. The flexible partnership is a rarity in the industry. One example is the joint development of Fibre



Class 10,000 Clean Room at SFO.



N Jehangir, Chairman and Managing Director, NeST Group

Laser based welding equipment for ship building industry," remarks Jehangir.

SFO played its role effectively in India's space missions, contributing nine RF Packages to the LVM3 Lunar Mission, two RF Packages to the Aditya-L1 mission and 4 RF Packages for the PSLV-C59/PROBA-3 mission and Cryogenic Engine Control components through the GOCO model.

SFO rigorously adheres to industry-leading quality standards such as NADCAP (National Aerospace and Defense Contractors Accreditation Program), AS9100D, ISO 13485:2016, ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, ESD S20.20, CMMI ML5 (Capability Maturity Model Integration Maturity Level 5), ISO 27001:2013, and ISO 45001, ensuring the highest levels of product quality and customer satisfaction.

Tech pioneer

NeST pioneered the introduction of cutting-edge technologies to Kerala, including Fibre Optics Design and Manufacturing, Digital Electronics Design and Manufacturing, RF and Wireless Lab Design/Manufacturing, VLSI (Very Large-Scale Integration) Design, Embedded Firmware Development, GIS and Fiber Laser Technology.

A key player in India's defence sector, NeST actively participates in offset programmes and is committed to the government's 'Design and Make in India' initiative, serving both domestic and international markets. One of the prestigious products is the development of Fibre Laser for defence applications.

NeST's commitment to excellence has been recognised with prestigious awards, including the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) Championship Award-2023 for 'niche technology capabilities' and multiple Definnovation Awards from the Electronic Industries Association of India (ELCINA) in 2023. "I dedicate these awards to our team, whose relentless efforts drive the development of innovative technologies," says Jehangir. "Our low attrition rate of 3 per cent

over the past decade hints at the strong employee satisfaction and commitment within NeST," adds Jehangir.

In line with global sustainability goals, NeST has begun a journey to reduce its carbon footprint. The company aims to achieve a 10 per cent reduction by 2024 and ultimately reach net-zero emissions by 2040.

For the past three plus decades, Jehangir has spearheaded Kerala's transformation into a growing factory to the world for electronic product and component manufacturing. Propelled by increasing exports, the company is set to excel as a consistent contributor to foreign exchange earnings. Concurrently, it is set to strengthen domestic sales through its ODM initiatives, as products developed for various R&D laboratories within the country are slated for production in the coming years.

Why did he select Kerala as a primary location for a substantial part of his company's operations?

"As a proud Malayali, I'm deeply connected to this land. Kerala is more than just a place; it's a part of my family. This State is brimming with potential. Treat Malayalis with kindness and respect, and they will return the favour. Compensate them fairly and they will excel. Present them with challenging tasks and they will consistently deliver. Nothing motivates Malayali tech professionals and workers more than a good challenge. In my company's 34-year history in Kerala, we've never experienced a single day of labour unrest. I'm proud to represent Kerala," says Jehangir.

His childhood nights in Aluva, Kerala, were etched with wonder as he gazed at the moon.

"Years later, a fragment of my passion and a part of my team's work, touched the lunar surface aboard Chandrayaan through some of its components we made. It's a humbling experience," he says.

The sky's not the limit for the NeST Group. •

