

# 'Want to make India an engineering and manufacturing hub'

French electrical and digital infrastructure major Legrand is planning to expand in the country, says **BENOÎT COQUART**, CEO of the group. In an interview with Peerzada Abrar, Coquart says Legrand is doubling down on investments and hiring about 500 people this year. Edited excerpts:

## **How do you view the global macroeconomic uncertainty and its impact on businesses, including yours?**

In five years, we grew from euro 5 billion to euro 8 billion. Now, there are a lot of uncertainties with the Russia-Ukraine war. There is scarcity of electronic components and the macro economy is not super supportive. But we are still shooting for some small growth. We said at the beginning of the year that we are aiming to grow between 2 per cent and 6 per cent in top line. So, we will continue to grow. This is because Legrand has been repositioned from traditional products such as light switches, circuit breakers, and cable management products to fast-expanding segments such as data centres, connected products and green products. Due to this repositioning, we believe that even though the economy will probably not be supportive in 2023, we will still grow by double digits.

## **How do you see the Indian economy and company's growth from your perch?**

India, for us, is a very important country. It is the fourth-largest country for us after the US, France and Italy. It's 5 per cent of our sales. We have 5,000 people here. We employ as many Indians as French. Of course, the Covid year was terrible. We had a lot of issues, including casualties. But after coming out of Covid, the economy has rebounded very significantly. Last year, we did more than 20 per cent growth in India. This year also, we intend to keep growing very fast. India has been our fastest-growing country for the past 25 years. Out of 25 years, there were 24 years of growth and only the Covid year was down.

## **India needs to invest \$1.4 trillion by 2024-25 on infrastructure. What are the opportunities that Legrand is tapping?**

Everything related to electrification is important for us. Whenever you electrify, you need to have UPS (uninterrupted power supply) to ensure quality and continuity of service. You also need circuit breakers and



switchgears for protection. India will also need 2 million electric vehicle charging stations by 2030. So, everything which relates to electrification should positively impact our business. The other area is healthcare. When you're building hospitals, you need switchgears, light switches, UPS and many other products.

## **Also, Indian and foreign companies may invest over \$18 billion in the next six years on data centre capacities in India, marking a sixfold growth. How does Legrand see this opportunity?**

It's amazing to see the growth of the data centre industry in India. It's even more amazing to see the evolution of digital usage in India, which in some cases is actually (more) advanced compared to European countries.

India has the highest mobile data consumption rate — more than the Americans, Chinese, Japanese and French. Clearly, there is a huge potential, and for that, we need to have a data management backbone.

## **At a time when the world is looking at the China-Plus-One**

### **diversification strategy, what kind of opportunity do you see for India and what role can Legrand play in that?**

We increasingly want to use India as an engineering and manufacturing hub for the group. About 86 per cent of what we sell in India is manufactured locally. The next target is to use our seven industrial units in India, to sell more outside India. It will help reduce a bit of dependency on China. We believe that India has a number of assets, which could be better leveraged for the rest of the world.



**BENOÎT COQUART**  
CEO, Legrand Group