



# MILESTONE MOTORS



**Mr. Sunil Gogoi, Managing Partner**

**By Ramesh Kumar, Consulting Editor**

He is destiny's child. He could have been a fauji. Or even a teacher. Sunil Gogoi's kundli read differently. He was not destined to follow his father's footpath, who himself was a primary school teacher. Father Mahendranath Gogoi wanted Sunil – the darling of Dibrugarh as a first general entrepreneur – to join armed forces. It did not fructify. Nor did the appointment letter from the Assam government offering him a job of science teacher in high school in his kasba. Notwithstanding the fact that a bulk of his school mates were keen on grabbing the science teacher's job – easy and cushy occupation with long vacations and short working hours – Sunil decided to pursue his business dream. Never in the annals of the Gogoi family, did business run in their veins. Where Sunil, the first child, has inherited the business genes from is still a mystery.

As one drives along the narrow National Highway 37 from Guwahati to Tinsukia – nestling the railway track, the eye-catching Milestone Motors showroom



**Mr. Debo Jyoti Dutta, CEO**

cannot be missed on to the left side once you cross Dibrugarh city. It is a brand new, majestic-looking Mahindra Navistar state-of-the-art dealer touchpoint selling trucks, tippers, dumpers, LCVs, HCVs and buses.

How did he get into trucking business? If one traces Sunil's career graph, it becomes clear that he was a born businessman. His antennae were able to grasp business potential in the surrounding tea gardens by taking up small contracts to build bunkers and toilets for tea garden workers even when he was in high school. Then he graduated to minor construction work in the neighborhood and today, he is one of the accomplished and CPWD-accredited civil contractors handling housing-cum-office colonies for PSUs. In the process, he began supplying oil vehicles for OIL and ONGC within Assam. Next step obviously was to get into opening petrol pumps. With backward and forward integration, soon to follow was the dealership for Hero Honda two-wheelers, under the banner of Rahul Honda.

That was when Mahindra Navistar was scouting for potential business partners to make an entry into the Tata Motors-dominated upper Assam area. "Every-

thing fell in place in double quick time," admits Atin Moulick of Mahindra Navistar. Given the fast-emerging auto giant's penchant for class and perfection, Sunil converted a 4.5 bigha land on the main thoroughfare into the state-of-the-art Mahindra Navistar dealer showroom under the banner of Milestone Motors at an investment of close to Rs. 2 crores, without taking the land cost into account.

How did the name come about? "I already have Rahul Honda under my son's name (Rahul) and so we debated within our family for a while and came with this name," explains Sunil. Adds his son, studying MBA in Mumbai: "Our goal is to create milestones in anything and everything we do and we hit upon this name." Rahul is his father's sole heir-apparent.

Tying up with a giant like Mahindra Navistar and building a spick-and-span dealer touch-point is one thing. The next big challenge is to get the best brains to run the business. Sunil candidly admits that he simply cannot run all his fledgling businesses ranging from civil construction to petrol pump to fleet management to Honda dealership and now to sell Mahindra Navistar products in eight districts of upper Assam



on his own. “It is tough and challenging. Team is the need of the hour. Qualified pool is very small and we realized that hiring outsiders – however qualified they maybe – will not work because they may not stick with us for long. So, we staffed locally”, says he.

All said and done, this ‘localisation’ theory smoothed the hiring process with the senior management team coming from Gogoi Motors, pushing Tata Motors in this region for several decades. Poaching? No, says CEO Debo Jyoti Dutta, himself an ex-Gogoi Motors hand, also the owner’s high school mate. And at some point of time, he did work for the Mahindra group as well. One common thread among Milestone Motor’s talent pool is their solid selling and marketing expertise – some sold pharmaceutical products, but most of them sold trucks in the region. “Yes, to that extent, we know the dynamics of this market inside out,” avers the turbaned fortyish Rajpal Singh Preet, Dealer Sales Manager (HCV), leading a four-member sales force. These are initial days with the showroom thrown open mid-October this year and the morale is still high. Making cold calls, knocking on potential customers, bidding for bulk orders in PSUs and leading



## THE TEAM

MANAGING PARTNER .....	Sunil Gogoi
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER .....	Debo Jyoti Dutta
DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER .....	Mridul Borborah
WORKS MANAGER .....	Pranab Barua
DEALER SALES MANAGER (HCV) .....	Rajpal Singh Preet
DEALER SALES MANAGER (LCV) .....	Rabindra Kumar Singh
CUSTOMER RELATIONS MANAGER .....	Runjun Dutta
SPARE PARTS MANAGER .....	Dibya Jyoti Gogoi

the team from front selectively keeps Singh busy. “Our products are world class and Mahindra is a renowned name. There’s a large amount of awareness in the catchment area,” adds Deep Shekhar Chakraborty, the latest entrant as sales executive.

He recalls his first sales call that turned out to be lucky: “On the second day of my joining, I met a client. It was raining heavily and I was fully drenched. From his body language, I could make out he was convinced of our product. A week after that, I revisited to close the deal and walk away with the advance,” says the proud biology graduate who until now was pushing pharma in upper Assam. From pharma to truck selling? What’s common between these two? “Tonnes and tonnes of patience! And regular activity to showcase your product to potential buyers,” adds he wistfully.

Six months ago when Mridul Borboruah joined as Dealer Sales Manager (HCV) at Milestone Motors, he was looking for a challenging assignment. Today, as acting General Manager, he is deep into it. He is unfazed. “It (designation) is immaterial. The fact is we are all into sales,” he puts it succinctly. What’s he upto? Besides continuously motivating his entire flock to remain positive always in a Tata Motors-dominated market space, he does hard-sell. For instance, he drove 275 km in both directions to showcase his 16-tonner MN 25 Tipper to a big client in his catchment area recently. “‘Seeing is believing’ is many potential buyers’ psyche. I fully appreciate that sentiment. I am equally a firm believer in ‘showing’ my strength. When you conduct a ‘demo’ at the client site on load capability and vehicle prowess in the presence of actual decision-makers, the chances brighten up,” elaborates he.

With the driver and a sales executive in tow, he had convinced the potential client of his vehicle's caliber – 'we are far ahead of the pack' is how he puts it post-demo – and it is just a question of time before a firm order form is generated. He is beaming with pride on this trip and in the process, the back breaking 275 km journey on Assam highways became inconsequential and insignificant.

Sunil Gogoi, like his business partner Mahindra Navistar, is sold on the philosophy that sales is just the tip of the iceberg. Actual business is in 'servicing' the client.

Not during the warranty period only, but beyond. Forever. Till he buys his next requirement from Milestone Motors again. Keeping this in mind, after-sales services assumes larger dimensions at Milestone Motors. Perhaps like in any other Mahindra Navistar ecosystem.

The young and cherubic Runjun Dutta, like a bird, moves around the entire 4.5 bigha Milestone Motors assisting all and sundry as Customer Relations Manager. With a bachelor's degree in English literature and a B.Ed, she is always on a phone call assisting owners/drivers in distress wherever, with the 24x7x365 NOW emergency service to Mahindra Navistar customers



**Mr. Rajpal Singh Preet,  
Dealer Sales Manager (HCV)**

across the length and breadth of India. In between discussing her job profile, she attends to a distress call from West Bengal and alerts NOW to take charge and also alerts the spares departmental head about the impending arrival of a bus for its maiden warranty period service. "Service is the bread and butter. We do it with a smile," says she with a genuine feeling for the needy.

In the shortest span of time, the Milestone Motors crew had created a buzz in the HCV market in upper Assam with total backing from Mahindra Navistar. At the end of day, it is the auto giant's vehicles that have to be sold in the market. Until recently, it was just one





Mr. Rabindra Kumar Singh, Dealer Sales Manager (LCV)

big player in this region that ruled the roost. The landscape has begun to change. By the way, Assam is not a BIMARU member, but a state rich in natural resources – oil, coal and tea. Big projects warrant a lot of digging, moving and construction which involves a large scale transportation need that has to be met by a variety of vehicles in various capacities. Outsourcing being the name of the game and the project size warranting huge logistical challenge, contractors have to line up young, energy-efficient and zero-fault machines that can withstand the work pressure.

This is where competition is hotting up. Every single player

## Eye candy

It was a dream come true for me too, like Sunil Gogoi.

As I travel through the length and breadth of mera Bharat mahaan, can't take off my eyes as I pass by Mahindra Navistar dealer touch-points on the edges of national highways. At least 300 metres before approaching these eye-candies, one thing that emanates from my oral cavity is: "wow" followed by a request to the driver to slow down for a slow motion darshan from a distance. Till now, no driver has denied me that pleasure.

It was the Indian Independence Day week this year and I was travelling from Jamshedpur to Chennai with Tata Steel load on a Tata Prima gaddi on National Highway 5 linking Kolkata with Chennai. Soon after we hit the four-lane road after a long and arduous journey on the two-lane Barapeta stretch,

the first thing that catches my eyes is a brand new Mahindra Navistar dealer showroom. As usual, the request to slow down is conceded and I 'enjoy' the spectacle. It was not the only time but happened every time. Be it on the bye-road after you cross Villupuram on the way to Madurai on NH 45 or wherever.

Until this November and Sunil's invite, I had never stepped inside a Mahindra Navistar showroom. So, it was a dream come true in my case too. The look and feel or design is more or less similar in every MN outlet. There is the stylistic and 'namaste' like 'M' logo in red lettering with a white background atop the edifice that catches you kilometers away. Glass-fronted and trucks, trippers, LCVs parked on the front porch and sometimes inside too. Spacious reception and cubicles for officials and customer lounges with self-contained washrooms, and a TV set to boot. All tastefully done up. Well, the only thing that is missing perhaps is a miniscule play

in the HCV/LCV segment worth his or her salt dreams a share of pie. Above all, Assam – be it Guwahati or Dibrugarh – is emerging as a huge transport hub not only to cater to the state's demands, but the entire north east consisting of seven states viz., Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Highway expansion underway on a large scale to link up these seven sisters with mainland India for a clutch of political and economic reasons envisages the huge business potential of the region.

Sunil Gogoi and his cohorts at Milestone Motors, pushing Mahindra Navistar wares with the state-of-the-art dealer touch point that can cater to all needs of owners of its equally modern machines, are perched at the right place and at the right

yard for accompanying children of potential buyers that has become the format in all passenger car dealer showrooms these days to ensure the kids coming out with parents for the prestigious buy are kept engaged while the selection and paper work is underway! Nowhere in the world maybe do kids tag along parents for the purchase of a truck, dumper or tipper or whatever.

Catchy posters of product information are craftily designed and tastefully displayed. They don't jar one's sensibilities. Uniformed staff with name tags for easy recognition and identification. A cafeteria to serve potential customers' taste buds. Officers' bays spell out their designation in a uniform format. That's for front office. The workshop where after sales service (warranty and post-warranty period) is handled sports clear demarcations such as Bay 1, Bay 2, Compressor Room, Tool Room, etc. Large, spacious and well-ventilated. And, not to forget the slot for the NOW 24x7 vehicle – the emergency



**Mr. Dibya Jyoti Gogoi,**  
Spare Parts Manager

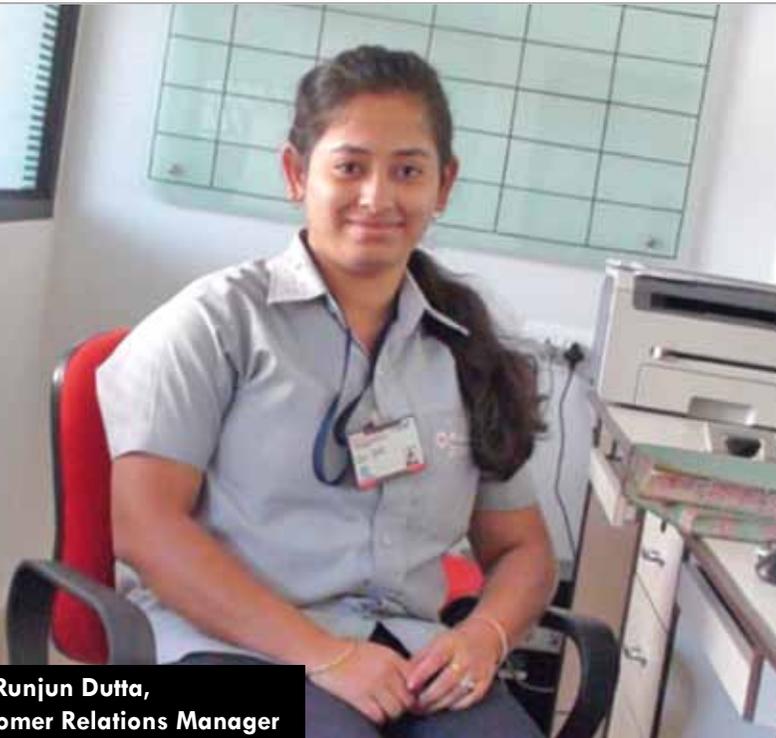
time. As an elderly businessman and the only resident to boast of BMW in this tea garden-packed Dibrugarh told that Sunil has a 'magic touch'. "Anything he gets into, he does well," adds he who incidentally has

vehicle on call round the clock.

Spare parts are well stacked and stocked. One of the items that potential buyers – big or small – ask or look for is the easy availability of genuine and original spare parts as and when needed. It is no secret big ticket deals are lost when the big buyer is not convinced fully about the spare parts management. It is not just about creating the spare parts section, but a constant vigil on the evacuation of parts and the need for quick refill. That's where information technology helps in the form of online tracking.

What's a dealer touch point without a washing bay? Definitely it is part and parcel of any MN outlet. Anywhere and everywhere.

Believe it or not, the MN dealer touchpoint concept or format has become a catalyst in the sense that selling truck can be made as attractive as pushing passenger cars from strategic locations. Show off is no crime in a competitive world. Don't we all agree?



**Ms. Runjun Dutta,  
Customer Relations Manager**

watched the first generation entrepreneur's consistent growth over years. Sunil, a simple and humble businessman, riding the sleekest of cars now, has not forgotten his non-motorized cycling days. That perhaps explains the dormitory he has built within the huge

Milestone Motors compound for truck drivers with decent bed and cooking facilities.

Recognition for his social activities in Dibrugarh fetched him a few accolades. This year, he received the 'Mother Teresa Excellence Award' by Integrated Council for Socio-Economic Progress, Thrissur, Kerala. In 2010, he was the recipient of the 'Golden Eagle Award for Prestige & Quality' from Revista de turismo, Industria y Comercio, Spain. Mahindra Navistar has always appreciated his adherence and 100 per cent compliance to process and systems in the dealership this year. It is just a question of time he wows Mahindra Navistar bosses to walk away

with some trophy or another.

Fortune favors the brave, it is said. Sunil Gogoi is brave and his past track record is ample proof. Did we not say at the beginning, he's destiny's child?

