



WHEELING SUCCESS

As he sits in his spacious office strategising and planning the success of Apollo Tyres, there is not a minute when his family is far away from his mind. He is surrounded by photographs of his wife and two beautiful kids and numerous other artefacts that depict his passion - mainly tyres and tennis.

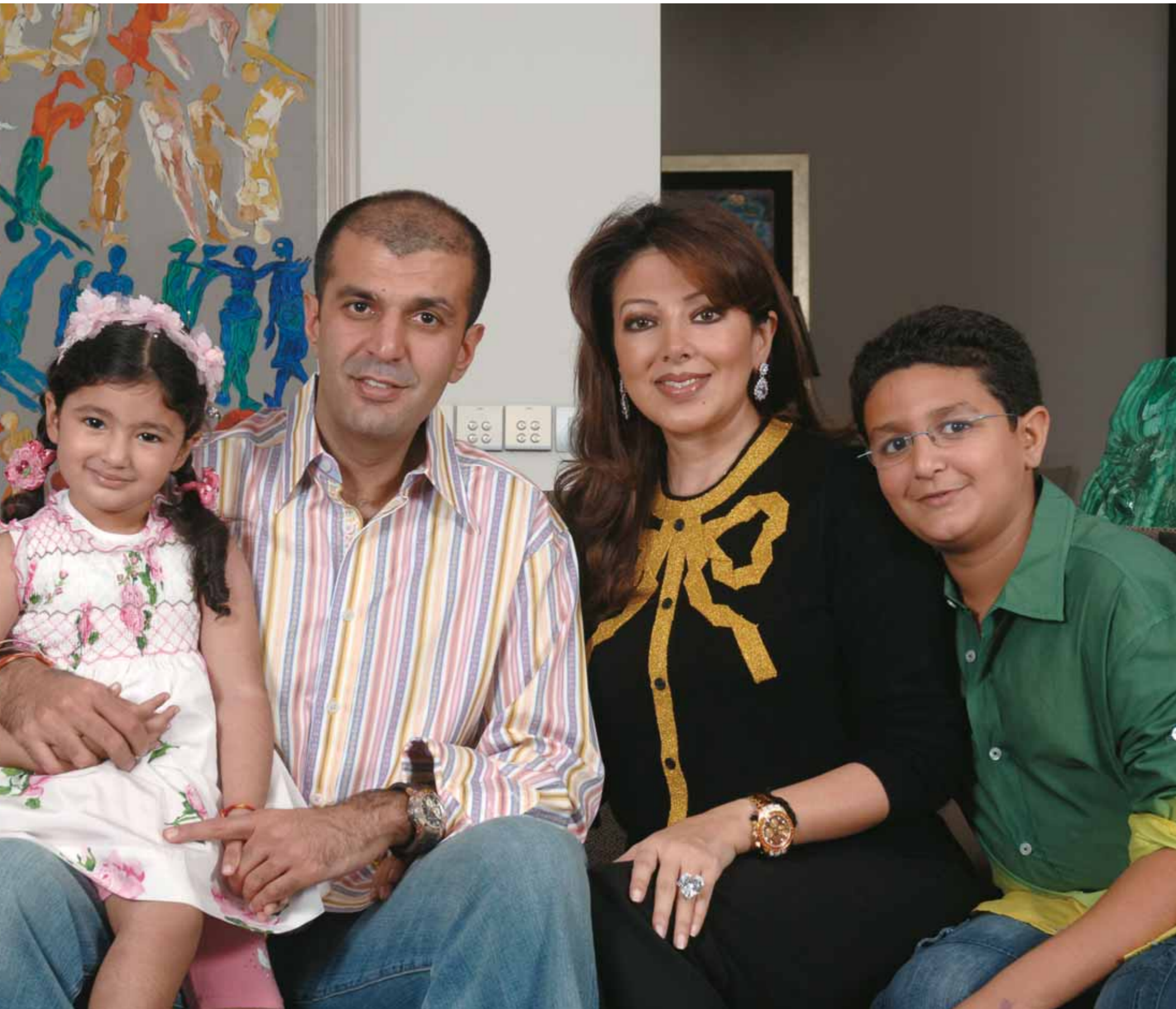
He talks animatedly about tennis - about Mission 2018, the HIV awareness campaign that he wants to spread among truck drivers and above all, his dream of making Apollo Tyres rank among the top six in the world. He knows he will do it!

Neeraj R S Kanwar, the Vice Chairman and Joint Managing Director of Apollo Tyres Ltd., has his success mantra all spelled out.

Globally, Apollo is one of the fastest growing tyre companies and ranks amongst top Indian multinationals. Neeraj first joined Apollo in 1991 as a summer trainee in Cochin. After some brief stints at the American Express Bank, New York and Global Finance Limited, Kanwar was back in India and joined the Corporate Financing and Leasing Operations divisions of Apollo Finance Ltd. In May 2008, the Apollo Board unanimously voted him as the Vice Chairman of the company.

MillionaireAsia's Arati Thapa and Soumya Jain in conversation with Neeraj Kanwar

Photographs: Rohit Suri



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What makes Apollo Tyres the largest tyre company in India?

Today, Apollo Tyres Ltd. is number one in the country. It has a growth path of 18-20 per cent a year. From 1976 to now it's been quite a journey and in 2006 with the acquisition of Dunlop in South Africa, we were the first to step outside India. Here we are number one in the commercial industry and number two on the passenger side.

What makes us number one is our interaction with, and service to, our customers. We have products adapted to customer needs and are continuously expanding our range. Add to this a large dealer network to service our customer. Innovative marketing strategies remain important for us. Research and technology play a key role as do our organic and inorganic growth plans.

Has the recession been affecting the tyre industry in India?

Recession has affected our company. It has affected everyone. These are challenging times and our

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margins have surely come down, but we are still better off than others. Rubber and oil, our primary ingredients for tyre making, have seen the highest rise in prices. OEMs have cut back production and there's a demand slow down. However, I am always hopeful and during such times it helps to have good products, a passionate team and innovative marketing in place.

Is there any ideal tyre company you look up to?

Michelin Group - they are the gurus. They have innovative products and have earned great respect and credibility in the whole industry.

Is it only tyres for your company or you want to diversify?

We are a highly focused tyre company and would not look at diversifying for the time being. Apollo Tyres is currently 15th worldwide and I want to take it to single digits now. Our organic and inorganic plans will play an important part in the same. Outside tyres, healthcare is another area we are actively working on and have our first facility in Gurgaon, Artemis Health Institute.

Do you think a company should be kept and handled within the family or you would enlist the help of professionals for its growth and development?

My philosophy is simple. Whether family or others, if there is passion, wealth will be created. If there is no passion or hunger for success, nothing can help. I look for passion, drive and character in an individual. If I have the zeal, the team should also have the same drive. It's a combination of team effort and drive which makes a company successful.

Family seems to mean a lot to you. What role has your family played in your success?

My father is my guru. He has taught me most of what I know and practice. I look up to him. He is also a guide and friend and we have fun together. My mother is God-fearing and has given me the values I hold dear and the confidence to run a successful organisation. Simran is my backbone and encourages me to aim even higher. The children are pure joy, especially during times of stress and tension.

What is your idea of corporate social responsibility? How do you fulfill it through your company?

We have seriously taken up the platform of HIV-AIDS awareness for our customers since 2000. We have 7-8 clinics which cater to AIDS awareness, prevention and



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APOLLO TYRES LTD

It is the number one Indian multinational tyre manufacturer with revenues of over US\$ 1.2 billion (FY08). The company has four manufacturing facilities in India and four in Southern Africa. A greenfield facility is coming up in Chennai, India and another is expected to be finalised soon in Eastern Europe. Apollo has a network of over 5,000 dealerships in India and South Africa. It has 10,000 people on its payroll and exports to more than 60 countries.

Milestones

- First Indian tyre manufacturer to have a global footprint in 2006 with the acquisition of Dunlop Tyres South Africa & Zimbabwe.
- Fastest growing in passenger vehicle tyres and the largest exporter of the same from India.
- Ranked among the top 50 Indian MNCs (Outlook Business, 23 February, 2008).
- Market leader in heavy and light commercial vehicle tyres in India.

Product Range

Truck, bus, light truck radial and cross ply; passenger car radial; farm radial; earthmover and industrial tyres; alloy wheels for passenger cars; retreading material and retreaded tyres.

Key Brands

Apollo, Dunlop, Regal and Kaizen

Recognitions

It is the first Indian tyre manufacturer to obtain an ISO 9001 certification for all its facilities in 1994 and globally is the first tyre manufacturer to receive a BS7799 certification for data protection and security in information technology. In 2008, Apollo Tyres was nominated in the 'Environmental Innovation' and 'Manufacturer of the Year' categories at the Tire Technology International Awards in Cologne, Germany and received the Jury Commendation for its CSR work at the Business World FICCI-SEDF CSR Awards 2007.

APOLLO TYRES' CSR ACTIVITIES

Apollo Tyres Ltd's definition of CSR stems from its vision statement of "continuously enhancing stakeholder value". Apollo Tyres Ltd is trying to reduce the vulnerability of those who work in the trucking community, through extensive HIV-AIDS prevention and awareness. Apollo Tyres Health Care Centres have been established across seven large transshipment hubs in Coimbatore, Delhi, Jaipur, Kanpur, Mumbai, Nagpur and Udaipur. The Centres are staffed with qualified doctors, paramedics, counsellors and out reach workers. The key areas of work include behaviour change communication, condom promotion and identification and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases and infections. Other CSR initiatives include support to the War Wounded Foundation which enables wounded soldiers to establish an alternate career by providing them guidance in setting up Apollo Tyres dealerships in their area of residence, along with providing wounded soldiers with light, high-quality limbs to enable them to remain active. In communities close to its manufacturing locations, the organisation engages in village development programmes, revolving around literacy, healthcare and infrastructure development.

On the environment front, Apollo is moving towards the use of less polluting and non-fossil fuel sources of energy like gas, steam and wind power. Water recycling is done at manufacturing locations to ensure replenishment of the local ground water table.

In May 2007, Apollo Tyres unveiled Mission 2018 to popularise tennis and create the first Indian Singles Grand Slam Champion by the year 2018. Indian tennis icon Mahesh Bhupathi has been roped in as a consultant and partner. It is one of the biggest sporting initiatives in the country, with a sum of Rs 1 billion earmarked for the next 10 years.



medical needs of the trucking industry. We also have programmes for our employees and our supply chain partners.

Another CSR programme is Mission 2018. The aim is to create the first Indian Singles Grand Slam champion by 2018. We have tied up with Mahesh Bhupathi for the same. We are going to train, coach and mentor children between 6-14 years and give them appropriate exposure in the sport. Currently, there are 21 children in the tennis academy in Bangalore.

Managing India's number one tyre company is no small job. How do you manage to steal time for your family?

Family is the backbone of all things and it needs time. On weekdays I am mostly in office, but weekends are purely for family. I play soccer and go for swimming



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Do you indulge in boating?

No, yachting or boating is not my cup of tea. I am not an ocean person. I am fond of planes though.

What is your idea of wellness? Are you fond of spas?

I like spas and gyms. I have a gym at home where I workout for an hour everyday. I like the pool too and massages are always welcome.

What does luxury mean to you?

Luxury for me means spending a quality vacation with my family. ■