

Indian Wind-Turbine Firm Hits Turbulence

BY TOM WRIGHT

New Delhi

THE GRAND U.S. ambitions of Indian wind-turbine manufacturer Suzlon Energy Ltd. are facing mounting problems.

The Indian company—the world's fifth-largest wind-turbine maker by sales—earlier this year acknowledged that 65 giant blades on turbines it had sold in the U.S. Midwest were cracking because of the extreme gusts in the region. The company is reinforcing 1,251 blades, almost the total it has sold in the U.S.

Now, other problems are emerging, in part because the company quickly ramped up U.S. sales to meet burgeoning demand for alternative energy.

Suzlon turbines installed at wind-farm projects managed by Deere & Co., one of its largest U.S. customers with 250 Suzlon turbines, aren't producing enough power to meet Suzlon's sales contracts, according to people familiar with the matter. Like other turbine producers, Suzlon promises its customers that turbines will be available to produce power at least 95% of the time the wind is blowing, with only limited downtime for maintenance and repairs. But in some cases the so-called "availability rate" has been significantly



Associated Press

Some wind-turbine rotors made by Suzlon Energy have cracked.

lower than this, potentially exposing the company to penalties, these people say.

Some turbines have failed to produce enough power because of incompatibility with the U.S. electricity grid. The power grid in India, where Suzlon has most of its operations, runs on a power frequency of 50 hertz. (A hertz is a unit for measuring frequency at which power is transmitted from a plant to the user.) U.S. electricity grids run on 60 hertz. Suzlon quickly converted turbines to work in the U.S. without extensive testing, these people say.

In written answers to ques-

tions, Suzlon said it has a 60-hertz version of its main turbine that is suitable for the U.S. grid. It declined further comment.

Other Suzlon turbines have broken down because of cold weather in the Midwest, says one person familiar with the matter. Suzlon engineers had to install heaters for the control panels, which sit just behind the blades atop the windmill's 264-foot tower. Those heaters caused electrical problems, the person said.

Suzlon, based in Pune, India, said it was committed to fixing the troubles it has encountered in the U.S. "In the initial stages of entry in a new market, it is common to have some teething problems and we are fully geared to take care of these," the company said. To date, Suzlon has disclosed only the problems with the turbine blades, which it is spending \$30 million to fix.

A spokesman for Deere declined to comment.

Suzlon shot into the top ranks of global wind-turbine manufacturers in less than a decade. Founder Tulsi Tanti saw an opportunity to license European technology and manufacture at cheaper rates in India. Suzlon's international expansion has tapped into the soaring global de-

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