



Photo: Saurin Singh

BAD START, NO SWEAT!

**MARIO PEREZ, DIRECTOR, CANARA HSBC
OBC LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD.**
WITH A LIMITED TEAM & BUDGET,
PEREZ IS EXPLORING LIMITLESS
POSSIBILITIES

■ Gyanendra Kumar Kashyap

His first experience in India was awful, he tells us, for he had to travel with his family in a taxi whose AC had malfunctioned in the heat of summer (44° C). After an agonising traffic jam, it was the turn of the car to give up – and then they had to walk. Grappling with the driver's Hindi, they were guided to a restaurant that served awful food. And the driver also managed to complete the day by taking them to a market where there was nothing they could really shop for. After this, Mario Perez would have probably never thought, or even wished, that he would have to relocate to India and head the sales & marketing of an insurance company, which was formed by marrying two public sector banking giants and a foreign bank. In retrospect, he believes that his first interaction with India was perhaps just a 'bad' day, for the journey thereafter has been quite a pleasant one. And he has cherished each and every lesson learnt here, especially his first lessons on customer segmentation in India – which he says he learnt from a Canara Bank branch manager.

Leading a relatively new company, he has relied on a team with complimentary skill sets. He opted for three different TV commercials, each one catering to a different target. While regulatory interventions in 2010 changed the insurance landscape, Mario believes that in the clutter, customer care, service and distribution will be the real differentiators. In the absence of a large ad-budget (*Rs.200-250 million for 2011*), Mario has intelligently put up processing kiosks (*not to be mistaken with service kiosks*), which will help them expand their footprint and also enhance brand value. Mario, who is a staunch believer in 'values', is of the opinion that more products do not necessarily translate into more sales; and with this thought process, his company plans to come up with 7-10 products (*child plans, ULIP et al*) in 2011. So any plans to leave India in the near future? Apparently, Mario divulges, his wife is now a regular shopper at the Sarojini Nagar market in New Delhi; and has even mastered the art of bargaining there. Apparently again, this is a combination that makes any person an addict of India! Well, Mario's journey has just begun – but he's ready for anything this time... even hot car journeys! ■