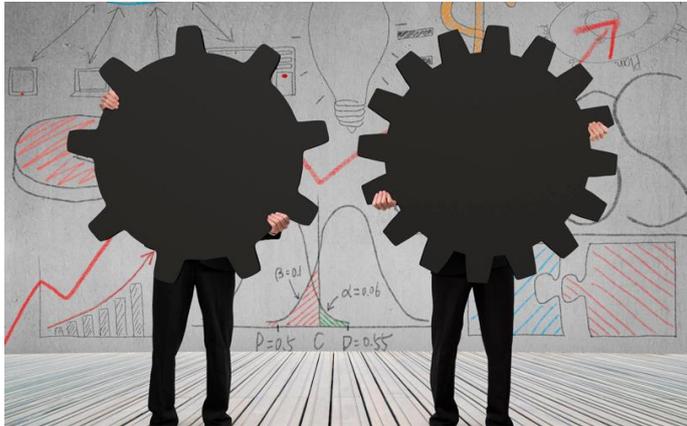


Qess Corp to buy Monster India, HCL Infosystems' after-sales business



Qess Corp said on Wednesday it has agreed to acquire jobs portal Monster.com's India, Southeast and West Asia units as well as HCL Infosystems Ltd's after-sales services business for consumer electronics and mobile phones.

Qess Corp will acquire Monster.com India Pvt Ltd for up to \$7.5 million (Rs 47.6 crore) from Monster Worldwide Inc., the business services provider controlled by Canadian investment firm Fairfax said in a stock-exchange filing. It will also purchase Monster.com companies in Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia at an enterprise value of \$6.5 million.

Besides, Qess will buy HCL Computing Products Ltd for up to Rs 30 crore (\$4.7 million), it said.

Qess chairman Ajit Isaac said the acquisition of Monster is aligned with its 'Digital First' strategy for businesses whereas the takeover of HCL Computing marks its entry into the "high-growth break-fix" market for smartphones and other electronics products.

Monster Worldwide finance chief Robert Gibney said the company will now focus on North America and Europe.

The acquisition of Monster India and related companies will bring the jobs portal's business in the country as well as in Southeast Asia and West Asia under Qess Corp's umbrella.

Monster has about 65 million registered users and adds almost 800,000 users every month, Qess said.

HCL Computing will be carved out of HCL Infosystems unit HCL Services Ltd. It provides after-sales services for mobile phones, consumer electronics and consumer durables through a service network spread across the country.

In a separate stock-exchange filing, HCL Infosystems said the transaction is likely to close by the end April. Annual revenue of the business it is selling is Rs 190.75 crore, it said.

Both deals are subject to regulatory conditions.

Qess, earlier known as IKYA Human Capital Solutions Ltd, was founded by Ajit Isaac. The firm was acquired by travel and tour company Thomas Cook in early 2013 for Rs 256 crore. It was then rebranded as Qess.

Thomas Cook itself was acquired in 2012 by Fairfax, which is controlled by Canadian billionaire Prem Watsa. India-born Watsa is the founder, chairman and chief executive of Toronto-based Fairfax Financial Holdings.

Qess went public in July 2016 through an initial public offering of Rs 400 crore. The IPO was subscribed a whopping 144 times, making it the most attractive primary market offering in eight years.

Qess has an active acquisition strategy, and it has acquired stakes in close to two dozen companies since 2008. In August, the company said it planned to raise Rs 1,150 crore (\$180 million) through an institutional private placement for acquisitions, other strategic initiatives and working capital requirements.

Its recent acquisitions include a deal to purchase a 90% stake in Greenpiece Landscapes India Pvt. Ltd for up to Rs 26.2 crore, a 51% stake in the business process outsourcing arm of Tata Group in November last year and a 70% stake in Vedang Cellular Services Pvt. Ltd for up to Rs 40 crore the month before.