

Steel's Sam Walton



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By Jennifer Warren

IN THE PIPELINE:

Satish Gupta anticipates strong demand for his steel.

Born into a steel family in Sonapat, India, Satish Gupta came to Dallas to earn an

M.B.A. degree nearly three decades ago. But he stayed to build what's become one of the fastest-growing com-



panies in North Texas.

Gupta founded Dallas-based SB International Inc., a metal exporter and importer of specialized steel products, in 1981—a time when steel was derided as a “sunset industry.”

Nobody's deriding steel now. Thanks in part to feverish activity in the Barnett Shale natural-gas field, SB International supplies increasing amounts of high-quality, specialty steel pipe and tubing from Korea and China to the red-hot U.S. energy market.

Gupta, who turns 49 next month, likens his company's strategy to Sam Walton's: SB International rides herd on the foreign-sourced product, mates the product to an extensive logistics network, then manages cost-conscious deliveries to his buyers, who are distributors and oil and gas pipeline outfits. “We are like the Wal-Mart of steel,” he says.

For the most part, Gupta's products are used for the exploration and transmission of new gas discoveries in the Barnett field, which encompasses at least 17 counties in North and Central Texas. “Most natural gas is produced in Texas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana,” he says, “but bottlenecks from neglected transmission lines impede supply going to the Northeast.”

That's where new pipelines—made with steel from suppliers such as SB International and its local rivals like Irving's Commercial Metals Inc.—come in.

Gupta, who declines to disclose his current revenue, expects strong demand for his products over the next three to five years. And his global approach is attracting attention. Last year he won recognition as Entrepreneur of the Year from the Greater Dallas Asian Chamber of Commerce, as well as the highly sought-after International Business Achievement Award from the Greater Dallas Chamber.