



On the Spot... Sushil Jhunjunwala

Announcing ambitious expansion plans for a new greenfield plant, Sushil Jhunjunwala spoke exclusively to *Glass Worldwide* about La Opala's specialist production of opal and lead crystal tableware, as well as his pride at recently being awarded the AIGMF's inaugural C K Somany Glass Award.

GW: What are La Opala's plans for a new manufacturing facility?

In addition to our current operations in Uttaranchal and Madhupur, we have acquired significant land located close

to our Uttaranchal plant and will construct a new greenfield plant, to open in 2021.

With three lines, we will be able to produce a lot more glass, similar to our existing product range but with the benefit of different shapes. We are already recruiting the workforce and our experience in the business means we can train the engineers and operators with great expertise.

GW: What is the motivation for such significant investment?

The new plant is a major investment and is being funded internally... but with increased production comes the benefit of partly reduced costs too. And the new plant will greatly assist us in continuing to innovate with new products, designs and marketing.

Investment in machinery and technology at the new plant will be with many of the same leading international suppliers we have worked with previously. If the quality is proven and the relationship has

been maintained, our preference is to continue long-term partnerships. But there has to be constant development, because we are looking to improve all the time.

Having been the first company in India to convert to an electric furnace in 2008, we would not consider any other form of melting at the new plant. We are proud not to use oil or gas and we find real quality and environmental advantages with electric melting. Like our other plants with no chimneys and low pollution, the new plant will not look like a typical glass factory!

GW: Are market conditions in India demanding increased production?

In general, tableware is growing, becoming more affordable and better quality. Strength is also improving as we temper all our products. But demand for opal glass is not increasing. It's a difficult market and whatever we produce is not necessarily easy to sell. Demand has to be created and we have to find new ways to sell.

As well as cost advantages, opal has many benefits over porcelain, being tougher with no scratch marks, for example. It's also a real advantage and very important that opal glass is bone ash-free; with the big health agenda, there is a real opportunity to increase market share.

So these are both challenging and exciting times... but without challenge, there is no life!

GW: And how is the tableware market performing outside India?

Tableware is required everywhere, so the market should continue to grow... but there is competition across the world. La Opala's design, innovation and world class quality is key. And then it's about how you control costs when making a world class product.



Sushil Jhunjunwala is honoured to receive the first C K Somany Glass Award.



Manufacturing capacity has been increased to 18,000 tonnes at La Opala's Uttaranchal site since the addition of a fifth production line. Furthermore, the introduction of a press machine has permitted the addition of cups and mugs to the plant's product range



GW: What were the highlights of the investment programme at your Uttaranchal plant last year?

We added one more line to make five in total, increasing capacity to 18,000 tonnes. With the addition of a press machine, we have added cups and mugs to our product range in Uttaranchal, having only been manufactured at our original plant in Madhupur in the past. This expansion has been very successful, providing logistical advantages for domestic sales and exports.

Now we also have an in-house decal plant and are manufacturing our own decal sheets. This investment means an improvement in the quality of paper and printing, particularly beneficial to vases. It also further supports our very talented design team with their innovative and original ideas.

GW: What is the future for the Madhupur plant?

Our recent expansion at Uttaranchal and plans for the new plant are all in addition to the well-established activities in Madhupur. We completed the latest modernisation programme there last year, changing the electric furnace and converting to 80% automatic production (there will always be products that require some manual operation). We purchased new machines over a three year period and when future attention is required, we will invest accordingly.

GW: How has La Opala's management structure changed in recent times?



AIGMF dignitaries celebrate Sushil Jhunjhunwala's recent C K Somany Glass Award recognition, from left to right: K C Jain (HNG Float), Raj Kumar Mittal (AIGMF President), Bharat Somany (HNG), Sushil Jhunjhunwala (La Opala), Pradeep Kumar Gupta (Om Glass Works), Sanjay Somany (HNG) and Mukul Somany (HNG).

Succession plans are key to any business so earlier this year, my son Ajit took over as Managing Director and I am now Vice Chairman.

With my daughter-in-law co-ordinating design and advertising activities, there are many benefits of this being a family run business. We can make fast decisions and adapt quickly when necessary.

GW: Recognising your valuable contribution in the fields of technology, manufacturing, innovation, services and education, what did it mean to you recently to be awarded the AIGMF's inaugural

C K Somany Glass Award, supported by Glass Worldwide?

La Opala has always been very active in the field of innovation and every year, the company is honoured to receive prestigious awards. However, to personally be the first winner of the C K Somany Glass Award is extra special for me. Mr Somany was like my guardian and was such a warm person. He was the Indian glass industry's figurehead and was always very open to offering technical assistance and advice. He is greatly missed. ●



Under Sushil Jhunjhunwala's management, La Opala produces a diverse range of opal and lead crystal tableware.



Sushil Jhunjhunwala and Sanjay Jain of Piramal Glass Pvt collected awards at the AIGMF ceremony last August.

Further information:

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