

# Rising to a new challenge

Anticipating further growth of the glass market in India and worldwide, container glass producer Sunrise Glass is expanding its facilities in Gujarat with a third furnace. In an exclusive interview with *Glass Worldwide*, preferred international journal of the All India Glass Manufacturers' Federation, Executive Director Gaurav Thakkar discusses the company's strategy for success in the post-Covid era.



Gaurav Thakkar is Executive Director of Sunrise Glass.



A manufacturer of flint container glass, Sunrise's priority markets are food and beverages.

One of the key players for manufacturing flint glass in India, Sunrise Glass is the container glass division of the Astron Group of Companies founded in 1982 by the late Hasmukhbhai M. Thakkar. The Group is India's leading manufacturer of ceramic raw material, involved in manufacturing zircon products, zinc oxide, sodium silicate, organic chemicals, ceramic glaze mixture,

container glass and other ceramic raw materials.

"Astron Group has extensive manufacturing experience," explains Gaurav Thakkar, Executive Director of Sunrise, who entered the glass industry seven years ago and looks after marketing and day to day operations for the company. "Sunrise Glass has always had the advantage of management, technical and

financial expertise from Astron Group," he continues, and is "progressing under the leadership" of Upesh Thakkar – Chairman of both Sunrise and the Astron Group – alongside Managing Director Hargun C. Bhambhani.

## Current capabilities

Sunrise Glass Industries employs 700 people and manufactures flint container glass to produce vessels for food and beverages – including soft drink bottles and liquor bottles, cosmetics and fragrance, and pharmaceutical containers. "Our priority markets are food and beverages, especially the alcobev [alcoholic beverages] industries," says Mr Thakkar.

Current production facilities include two furnaces – each with a fully automated batch house, eight high speed DG 5ins and 41/4ins IS-8 section machines, 1–8 section TG and 1–6 section single gob for making bottles in a wide range of shapes, sizes and weights, and high quality annealing courtesy of six automated 8ft/10ft wide lehars. Current total capacity is 380 metric tons.

Geographically, the company has one of the most strategic locations for glass manufacturing, believes Mr Thakkar. "We are based in Gujarat where all the soda ash manufacturers of India are located," he explains. "In Gujarat you find the best quality silica sand. Also we are just 20km from the seaport – Hazira Port which helps us to increase our exports."

The business's main customers are high profile producers of alcoholic beverages, Pernod Ricard India and Diageo India. The key to a successful customer relationship is to combine the best service with the best quality product, according to Mr Thakkar. "The success mantra of our founder is 'We have to become the best and simply deliver ▶



The company benefits from being based in Gujarat where the soda ash manufacturers of India are located.

the best to our customer with respect to quality, service and cost', and Sunrise Glass believes in it," he expounds.

An emphasis on environmental factors is also important to the company: "We are focused on reducing [our] carbon footprint," affirms Mr Thakkar. The company is committed to increasing the rate of recycling glass and using clean fuel. In addition, Sunrise is focused on the development of its employees and is involved in CSR activities for positive impact.

### New furnace

In India, glass is growing steadily, reports Mr Thakkar. "Glass is the best packaging solution and we are sure that many producers will switch from PET [polyethylene terephthalate] to glass." Sunrise has increased its capacity three times in the last ten years and to meet future demand the company is in the process of setting up a third furnace in 2021.

"With the upcoming furnace we will have a capacity of 610 tons per day," forecasts Mr Thakkar. "With 610 tons per day, we will be India's sixth largest flint container glass manufacturer."

Key elements of the investment include upgrading technology with advanced AIS and inspection machines for a greater focus on quality. "The furnace will have four lines with three AIS 10 triple gob Emhart Machines. All the lines will have EVM inspection machines, and along with this we have installed an automatic cullet sorting plant that has been imported from Binder+Co in Austria," says Mr Thakkar.

The criteria for selecting suppliers to support this expansion varies according to different areas of the process, notes Mr Thakkar but in the main "reliability of the supplier" is the deciding factor, with long term relationships underpinning Sunrise's most fruitful partnerships.

Despite a Covid-related delay of six months to get the new furnace up and running, customers have reportedly already shown a positive response to the company's investment and the opportunities it presents.



Mr Thakkar's role entails looking after marketing and day to day operations for the company.

### AIGMF membership

Sunrise is a member of the All India Glass Manufacturers Federation (AIGMF), the sole representative body of all segments of the Indian glass industry, which Mr Thakkar believes plays an important role in the Indian glass industry. "AIGMF is the platform where the issues and problems related to glass industry are presented to Government. AIGMF plays the most important role for the development of glass industry in India," he states.

At the virtual AIGMF Executive Committee Meeting held on 20 April 2021, members were educated on how AIGMF activities were reported globally via *Glass Worldwide* articles and

shown how the existing co-operation provides the Indian sub-continent with an effective forum for the exchange of news and views between glass manufacturers and their suppliers.

Similarly, in October 2019 the 6th edition of glasspex INDIA provided a global platform for India's key industry players of the flat glass, container glass and tableware to come together to discuss industry trends, challenges and market insights including the Indian regulatory framework.

Mr Thakkar cites AIGMF's International Conference and the glasspex INDIA exhibition as events which have "always helped us to get the updates for the global glass industry and new updates on technology."

### Future plans

"We are looking and hopeful for the constant growth of the glass market," states Mr Thakkar. Utilising its third furnace Sunrise is hopeful of boosting the export side of its business but the immediate challenge is "to get the market recovered fully from the Covid impact. [There are] also new capacities coming [from the] west which will be competitive for us," Mr Thakkar observes.

The company's short/medium-term ambitions concern the food market, and establishing "a good presence" in this sector. "Our long terms goals are to build an amber or green colour glass furnace," says Mr Thakkar. ●



Sunrise Glass is the fastest growing producer of container glass in India.

#### Further information:

Sunrise Glass Ind Pvt Ltd,  
Gujarat, India  
tel: +91 98 7960 9818  
email: info@sunrisegipl.com  
web: www.sunrisegipl.com