



SCHOTT maintains a manufacturing hub for the pharma industry in India.



On the Spot... Eric L'Heureux

Having launched state of the art plants across the country, SCHOTT Pharma with its Indian joint venture SCHOTT Poonawalla has received external recognition as a manufacturing hub for India's pharma industry. Eric L'Heureux, Managing Director of SCHOTT Poonawalla Pvt. Ltd., spoke exclusively to *Glass Worldwide*, preferred international journal of the All India Glass Manufacturers' Federation (AIGMF).

GW: What did it mean to you personally to be awarded the 2022 C K Somany Award by the AIGMF and for SCHOTT Poonawalla to be the recipient of the sister 2022 award, the Balkrishna Gupta Award for Exports?

It is truly a great honour to be awarded the 2022 C K Somany Award by the All India Glass Manufacturers' Federation (AIGMF) and for SCHOTT Poonawalla to be awarded the Balkrishna Gupta Award for Exports. It is our mission to provide the pharma industry in India with the highest innovative drug containment and delivery solutions based on cutting-edge technology. This is a reward for the hard work that we have done throughout the years.

GW: What do you consider to be the key factors in SCHOTT Poonawalla receiving such external recognition?

We are proud to say that at SCHOTT Poonawalla we combine German product engineering skills with industry expertise from India. A key factor is also the high quality of our product solutions. All our plants fulfil the high requirements from the pharma industry.

GW: What first attracted you to a career in the glass industry and what would do you consider your career highlights to date?

Specialty glass has always fascinated me and I'm proud to be able to look back on 30 years that I've spent working in this industry and within the SCHOTT and SCHOTT Pharma network. I've held several managing positions in Belgium (QA manager), Indonesia (Technical Director and President Director), Hungary (General Manager), Singapore (Vice President Asia), and India (Director Operation and now Managing Director). In India, I was part of the management team of the joint venture that is now SCHOTT Poonawalla following Serum Institute of India acquiring the 50% stake of the company. This development is one of my highlights to date. As a side note: my son has also managed the ampoule production in India before moving back to Belgium working now in Pharma Industry, so the fascination for specialty glass and Pharma runs in the family.

GW: What position does SCHOTT Poonawalla currently hold in the Indian glass industry?

SCHOTT Poonawalla is a leading Indian manufacturer of pharma drug



Eric L'Heureux with the AIGMF's 2022 C K Somany Award, supported by *Glass Worldwide*.

containment and delivery solutions, such as prefilled syringes, cartridges, vials, ampoules and ready-to-use drug containment solutions. These products are used to store life-saving medications. We serve the Indian pharma market and thereby also support the export of pharma products of Indian drug manufacturers.

The joint venture with Serum Institute of India is an excellent example of shifting towards new cooperation models, with greater synergies between pharma manufacturing and drug containment production.

GW: What is SCHOTT Poonawalla's role within the wider SCHOTT Pharma company and what are the main benefits of being part of such a global conglomerate?

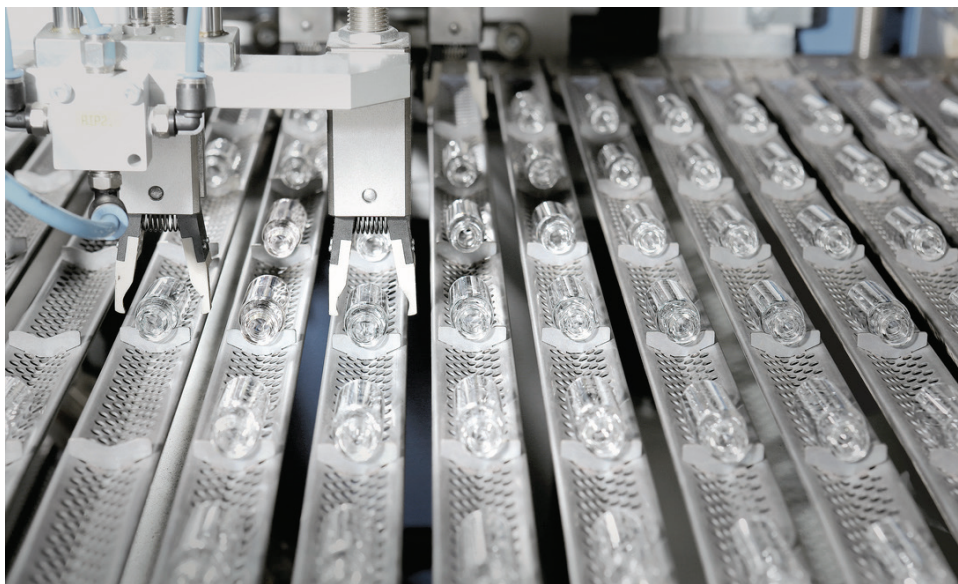
Our manufacturing sites in India are part of SCHOTT Pharma's global network that spreads across 14 countries. It has always been SCHOTT Pharma's strategy to manufacture pharma drug containment and delivery solutions close to the customer. In recent years, India has emerged as one of the large mass production clusters for vaccines in Asia. Simultaneously, we have established a strong base in India that functions as a manufacturing hub for the pharma industry in India and supports the export of products of Indian pharma companies.

In my role, I drive our business growth together with customers from the industry. We focus on innovations and technology developments to further advance the industry and to strengthen the high quality standard in India.

GW: Are there any particular examples of recent or impending product innovations from the Indian operations that you are particularly proud of?

Generally speaking, we follow SCHOTT Pharma's global innovation strategy. One highlight, for example, is in the field of ready-to-use (RTU) containment solutions that relieve pharma companies from preparatory process steps. These RTU solutions enable pharma companies to efficiently perform pre-clinical and clinical trials as well as commercial filling.

GW: What are the origins of SCHOTT's activities in India and highlights of major investments/projects that have been completed in recent times? SCHOTT has been present in India for several decades. In 2008, SCHOTT founded a joint venture, which today



SCHOTT Poonawalla is a domestic and international supplier of vials for Covid-19 vaccines.

operates as SCHOTT Poonawalla. The JV has been successful since the very start and we look forward to continuing on this path together.

Over the last three years, we have invested roughly INR 600 crores to significantly increase our production capacity in India. We set up two new plants in Umarsadi, Gujarat and Baddi, Himachal Pradesh, to secure supply for the pharma industry.

GW: How closely do manufacturing operations in the India now fit the ideal SCHOTT Pharma model?

All SCHOTT Pharma plants around the world follow an international standard. Our production sites in India are already equipped with cutting-edge technology.

GW: How many people are employed at your sites in India, what levels of expertise are employed and how does the company invest in its workforce?

Today, across our plants and the head office in Mumbai, the total headcount of SCHOTT Poonawalla is 2,350.

Three key fields of expertise are Quality, Engineering and Marketing & Sales (including Product Development). We constantly develop the workforce through internal and external training.

GW: What role did SCHOTT Poonawalla play in supporting the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, both domestically and internationally?

We have delivered an important contribution to the global efforts to combat Covid-19.

During the pandemic, SCHOTT

Poonawalla was the supplier of vials for Covid-19 vaccines, not only for India but also supported the global vaccination drive by exporting vials across the globe.

GW: Is there still potential for quantum improvements in glass manufacturing methods and production efficiencies or more gradual refinements? In either case, where should the industry's priorities lie in India?

As you can imagine, the pharma industry requires unique solutions to safely store life-saving drugs. The glass is mainly Borosilicate glass. It is chemically inert, meaning it avoids the interaction between the container and the medication, preserving the drug's effectiveness. This is why it has been the gold standard to store drugs for a long time.

SCHOTT Pharma has been producing pharma drug containment and delivery solutions for almost a century and sees huge potential in adding deep tech such as Big Data or AI to continuously push the cosmetic and dimensional quality of the products to higher levels.

GW: In general, how important are technological advances from your suppliers to assist SCHOTT Pharma reaching its goals in India?

Overall, we work together closely with our partners and customers. As you can imagine, sourcing the right drug containment and delivery solution is a strategic process and we have signed NDAs with our customers and cannot share further details.

GW: What is your role personally now and in the past with the AIGMF and what are the main benefits of membership for SCHOTT Poonawalla?

This is my first time interacting with AIGMF, as in the past, it was managed by our previous Managing Director. Our collaboration with AIGMF gives us more visibility in the glass industry, developments therein and more interactions with other players in this segment. The federation also lends active assistance and support when needed. ●

Further information:

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