HIGH PRESSURE FOAMING ALLOWS WIDER FOAM RANGE, HIGHER QUALITY, SAYS SHEELA-FOAM

Report from ***Hennecke GmbH***

India is a country in transition. As well as being the most-populated democracy of the world, it has a culture and tradition that goes back for millennia. But, thanks to strong know-how in various key industries, it also has an extremely promising future.

The economy has grown rapidly since market liberalisation in 1991, and today, India has one of the world's most important economies and has international competence in several fields.

This is also true for the Indian PU industry, especially for Sheela-Foam, which is by far the most important manufacturer of PU foam goods in the South Asian nation.

The company meets growing domestic demand for high-quality slabstock using Hennecke machinery and plant technology.

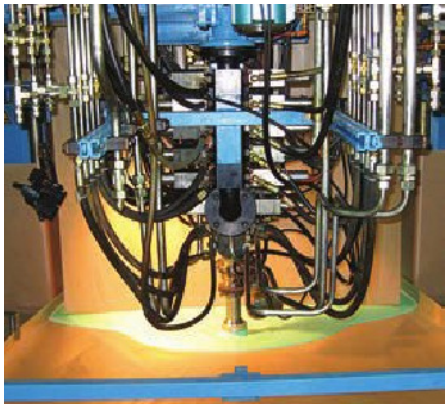
Sheela-Foam, founded in 1972 by Sheela Gautam, is a strong name in the PU world, and was a pioneer in the Indian PU industry. Today, the PU processor has a diverse product range and it can look back on impressive growth. In India alone, Sheela-Foam has ten ISO-certified manufacturing bases and has five more in Australia (the Joyce Foam units).

l-r K.V.R. Prasad, Hennecke India; Tushaar Gautam, Sheela coo; Karsten Brückner, Hennecke; Arvind Kumar, vice president Sheela; Rahul Gautam, Sheela managing director

Apart from high-quality standard foams, the company offers a variety of technical foams for special industrial applications. For these, Sheela-Foam uses machinery and plants made by Hennecke, the long-established German PU machinery supplier.

High pressure development

By commissioning a QuadroFoamat (QFM) slabstock plant, Sheela was able to set up continuous slabstock production with high-pressure metering systems.



The new Hennecke QFM machine at Sheela-Foam

Hennecke's sales manager Karsten Brückner spoke to Tushaar Gautam, grandson of Sheela-Foam's founder and the company's production manager, about the business relationship with Hennecke, the company's experiences with high-pressure machine technology and the future of the Indian PU industry.

Asked why Sheela-Foam has only just recently invested in its first Hennecke QFM slabstock plant – it came on stream in 2007 – Gautam said: "Today, the Indian PU market has reached a stage where a great deal more quality and an increasingly wide product range are demanded. This is only possible with high-pressure component mixing.

"By deciding to use Hennecke plant technology in our production process we have reacted successfully to the needs of the market," he added.

Gautam said that the new plant, which allows continuous production of high-quality foam products, has given the foamer "remarkable plant reliability." And the company has seen "a significant increase in production efficiency," he added. Sheela now feels it has the possibility to use all sorts of raw materials and can therefore gradually expand its product range, the executive continued.

Sheela is the first Indian company to offer polyester-based foam products. "Before, these always used to be imported. If anything, we regret not investing in Hennecke plant technology earlier," Gautam said.

Sheela-Foam's contact with Hennecke dates back to 1994. Gautam said that from this long experience, "I associate Hennecke with excellent customer service," and especially with overall service and production assistance in the initial start-up phase. He feels the supplier is "always a reliable partner when it comes to questions about the processing technology in general and system technology and control in particular."

India's complexity increases

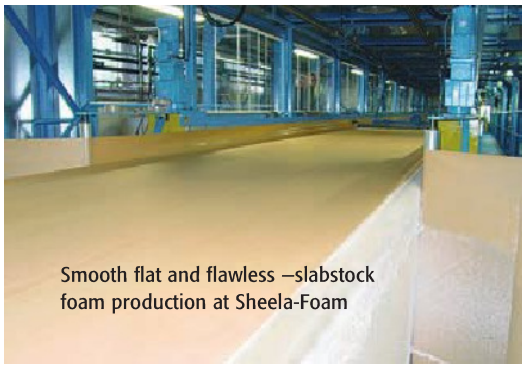
Trends Gautam commented on in the Indian polyurethanes market include a growing demand for complex and high-quality foams. "I think that there is still a great potential here and we're well on the way to tapping into it."

But use of PU products is still quite low per head of the population in India. Asked what could be done to change this, Gautam said the high quality of Sheela's products is one route to increasing demand for polyurethane.

He also noted that high-pressure technology "opens the gate for many other appealing characteristics."

The effective exploitation of raw materials with Hennecke's QFM system "noticeably increases our production efficiency, and thus lowers the costs for the end user," he said.

Gautam also stressed that, "We have to inform existing and future consumers more about the possibilities offered by polyurethane. This way, we can tap into new fields of application," he feels. And the best example of this, the Sheela-Foam manager concluded, is in "the increasing number of technical foams that we now offer on the Indian market."



Smooth flat and flawless –slabstock foam production at Sheela-Foam