

Uninterrupted gas supply of paramount importance for ceramic and glass industry

The Glass and ceramic industry which is registering an annual growth of 12 to 17 percent could grow further only with the reliable availability of electrical power and gas supply which is a critical element in operations of the industry. This was the consensus at an **Conference on 'Energy Policy & Technology for Ceramics & Glass Industry'** held as part of **CeraGlass India 2010**, India's first ever comprehensive ceramics, glass and allied products show organized by **Rajasthan State Industrial Development & Investment Corporation (RIICO)**, Government of Rajasthan, **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** and **Indian Ceramic Society (ICS)** with the **support of the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry**.

The participants in the Conference opined that the industry now heavily relies on natural gas or heavy furnace oil (HFO) for melting the raw material and natural gas is the preferred choice of fuel over HFO as it is cost effective and has an edge over other fuel from the point of view of cost, process efficiency and environmental impact. The cost of energy is a significant part on the total cost of manufacturing ranging from 20 to 35 percent depending on the process, technology and plant capacity. Energy is a key element in manufacturing efficiency.

Mr. Sunil Arora, Principal Secretary- Industries of Rajasthan Government and Chairman of RIICO, said the industry requires not only quality but also uninterrupted power as any interruption in power supply, particularly in large scale glass industry, leads to heavy production losses. He said the production cost of backup power is almost three times higher. The importance of uninterrupted power can be highlighted from the fact that the few seconds interruption of power supply can lead to loss of around Rs 1.5 crores in a float glass unit besides few hours to restart. The few hours of interruption in such units could cost a loss running into crores.. Mr. Arora further stated that any interruption in energy supply in ceramics unit leads to either total rejection of batch or substantial loss of quality.

“We are setting up a ceramics base at Gilot and our strength is that almost all the raw material for ceramics and glass industry are available in the state. The state should get the benefit of value addition. Rajasthan's power scenario is better than other states and apart from conventional energy the state is producing wind energy and soon it would become a big hub of solar energy too. Thus, while there would be no dearth of power for ceramics and glass industries in Bhiwadi, Gilot and Neemrana there is still a need for a gas grid as gas is the cheapest of all the energy sources. The Rajasthan government would take up the issue of gas linkage to Ghilot which would pave way for developing it as a ceramic hub.

Mr. Arora said solar energy would become a big energy source in the arid state,. However a lot of development would depend when there is large scale manufacturing of photovoltaic material which is the key ingredients for solar energy. He said the photovoltaic's currently imported are very expensive and unless its manufacturing starts in the country solar energy would not be able to get the desired boost.

Mr. Arora said that CeraGlass 2010 was a tremendous success, and the second edition would be even better. He said Jaipur would again host the biennial second edition the date of which would be announced at the Valedictory Session on Sunday.

Mr. R Rajgopalan, Senior Vice president, Carborundum Universal Ltd said as the ceramics and glass industries are energy intensive, reputed companies have over the years have made investments in research and technology for energy saving. The float glass industry, in particular, has made remarkable contributions to energy saving in both glass and ceramics industries. Advancement in material used in furnace construction, innovation in design and continuous improvement through manufacturing excellence has led to energy saving.

He stated that the high sulphur content HFO increases the pollution levels . Hence the industry looks forward to source HFO with low sulphur content. However Natural gas is an ideal source of energy, environment friendly and cost effective.

Mr. Rajgoipalan explained that products manufactured by the glass and ceramics industry were 100 percent recyclable and not hazardous to health. The industry recycled all its internal rejections he said.

Mr Swapan Guha, President, Indian Ceramic Society, stated that the growth of the industry would depend on gas linkage and Rajasthan should take an initiative by providing the entrepreneur with an efficient gas grid .

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