



On the Spot... Boonsak Stitmannaithum

Until recently, Boonsak Stitmannaithum was Executive Vice President at Thai Glass Industries (TGI) and Thai Malaya Glass (TMG). Before moving to a new managerial role within the parent Berli Jucker plc (BJC) group, he spoke exclusively to *Glass Worldwide* about the significant investment in TMG's operations in Saraburi as well as the wider activities of the group and the GMFTI.

GW: How has the SB4 furnace in Saraburi performed since commissioning in 2017, adding 300 tonnes/day and five production lines?

SB4 was the start of an ambitious investment programme. With five IS machines from Emhart Glass, SB4 has a lot of job changes and allows great flexibility.

At Thai Malaya Glass, we inherited Emhart machines and therefore were inclined to continue with them ever since. When we constructed SB3 in 2014, we standardised the whole plant with Emhart technology, resolving any previous challenges and ensuring very high efficiency. At that time, staff on SB1 and SB2 were extensively trained too... everything has worked perfectly since.

At 400 tonnes/day, SB3 also has a lot of job changes... but with a good partnership with SORG, energy consumption on the SB3 furnace is the best we have. We were impressed with those numbers and therefore, partnered with SORG again for SB4 and then for SB5, the most recent production plant.



The inauguration ceremony for the SB5 melting furnace took place in the Thai Malaya Glass plant in Saraburi last August.

GW: Inaugurated in August 2018, what was the motivation for commissioning SB5 in a relatively short space of time after SB4?

The motivation was increased demand. We are maintaining our market share of approximately 39% and are in a position of building new furnaces while other companies are closing theirs.

Some of the demand comes from within our own group (ThaiBev, for

example) but half of our produce is sold to the open market. We keep it that way so we are not dependant on one customer.

The packaging market in Thailand is still growing and therefore, there is significant investment in the glass industry in general. For example, with around 36 million tourists in 2018, consumption is growing. And another factor is that in the food sector, we are exporting more and more.

So to meet demand, the regenerative, gas heated, end-fired furnace from SORG at SB5 has expanded the group's production capacity by 400 tonnes/day. ▶



Boonsak Stitmannaithum (fourth from right) with Chatchai Panichcheewa (centre) and other GMFTI representatives at the 42nd ASEAN Glass Conference in Indonesia last year.

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GW: Are any further expansion plans already in place across the group?

There have already been talks about another furnace... but the decision making is not imminent and there is no timeframe. We are well prepared and believe future demand will dictate it.

GW: In the meantime, what are the opportunities for maximising production in the existing operations?

Last year, we tried a two line multi job on the same machine. This is an area that we will continue to explore and improve, opening up more new markets for customers that want low quantities. If we can lower the investment for those customers, we can offer solutions in glass packaging instead of alternatives such as PET. We think it is very important.

GW: Considering the significant growth in operations, what were the challenges of recruiting production staff with the necessary expertise?

Since we expanded with SB4, more and more we are now spreading expertise throughout the team. So rather than one production manager taking care of one furnace as in the past, the production manager now looks after two furnaces, with a junior production manager working under him.

Historically, production managers have tended to come from the hot end and therefore focus on those areas... so now the junior can look after the cold end. And finally, the junior can be promoted to production manager. You have to give them time but it's a system that is working really well.



Increased demand was the motivation for commissioning the SB5 furnace.

GW: How important is the Industry 4.0 concept to your business?

We actually have a dedicated Industry 4.0 team. We are connecting all the data available and creating useful information. We are understanding more and more and it's an ongoing process. Big progress has been made by our in-house team in the last year and we also make use of the opportunity to talk to external experts.

GW: Launched in 2016, what contribution has the group's R&D department made to proceedings?

We have seen many benefits from this investment. Although we are not in a position to disclose further details at this time, there has been progress in energy saving and flexibility that we hope will materialise soon in different areas. We will continue to invest in R&D to further reduce energy costs; we are very strong in this area.

GW: What are the benefits to TGI and TMG of being part of the wider BJC group?

In 2016, BJC purchased the Big C department store,

which generates huge sales. This is a really big deal and there is now a real awareness of BJC throughout Thailand. Since the purchase, BJC has grown stronger and stronger and the BJC Glass brand is being used frequently. On occasions, some of our customers may not know if they are buying glass from TGI or TMG... the BJC Glass brand is becoming increasingly well known.

GW: How are the efforts of the Glass Manufacturers Industry Club, The Federation of Thai Industries (GMFTI) assisting glassmakers in the region?

In 2017, I was appointed Vice Chairman of the GMFTI, with Chatchai Panichcheewa of Bangkok Crystal as Chairman. The federation has a really important role to play and without sharing anything competitive, the members come together to collaborate and discuss common industry challenges such as a natural gas cost calculation formula and raw materials supply. The true competition is other forms of packaging.

As a member of the ASEAN Federation of Glass Manufacturers (AFGM), it is very useful to have Glass Worldwide as our official journal because in my opinion, it is the industry's number one glass magazine. ●



For the completely new SB5 production plant, SORG supplied a regenerative, gas heated end-fired furnace, including control system and all peripheral equipment.

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