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Thickening
Open time
Adjustment time
Cost reduction
Bounce back reduction
Application Speed

Applications : Gypsum
Manual Plaster
Finishing plaster
Spray plaster
Joint filler
EIFS
Spot Glue

Benefits : Gypsum
Anti-sag
Thickening
Workability
Working time
Smoothness
Surface hardness
Reduce chalking
Application Speed



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* Benefits are also dependent on quality of ingredients, formulation and optimisation of blend.

Editor's Page :

AI Views Vs. My Views – A battle in the Mind !!!



I had some fundamental questions and decided to ask the Artificial Intelligence based Chat Bot to answer them. Non of these answers matched my thought process & therefore I felt a need to share them with the readers of Drycotec Diaries. Please think about them & let me know your thoughts. I would be happy to publish your views in the next article.

WHY IS THE GOLD RATE RISING STEADILY ?

AI Answer : Ongoing geopolitical tensions & inflationary pressures have increased rates, which has led to central banks, including RBI, increasing gold reserves to diversify from dollar assets.

My Answer : Because we just keep buying gold, why don't we make our jewellery from Stainless Steel ?, why is your love for Yellow so high ?, Yellow, Yellow, Dirty Fellow, we are making gold expensive.

WHY IS RUSSIA & UKRAINE STILL NOT STABLE ?

AI Answer : Russia's actions are seen as an attempt to reassert influence over former Soviet territories, while Ukraine seeks closer ties with Western nations (EU & NATO). While there have been talks of ceasefires, mutual distrust and violations of agreements hinder progress.

My Answer : There is something else, something big cooking. A giant like Russia could have squashed Ukraine in a few days, but they did not. Something does not feel right. Something big could be involved. Kuch toh hai boss !!!

WHY IS AMERICA NOT GREAT AGAIN ?

AI Answer : Donald Trump faces opposition from groups & individuals. Members of the Democratic Party, senators & representatives, challenge his decisions. LGBTQ + rights, immigration reform, and environmental issues are against his executive orders.

My Answer : America will soon be great. They have stopped funding to other causes & countries. They have removed thousands of employees from the government offices, they have deported immigrants. Money saved is money earned. Let us do similar exercise in India & make it great.

WHY DID SUNITA WILLIAMS NOT GET A HAIR CUT IN THE SPACE STATION ?

AI Answer : In space the hair floats freely, making it challenging to cut or style. Astronauts often prefer to keep their hair open to avoid discomfort and scalp tension caused by tight hairstyles.

My Answer : When you go on a trip for a few days & get stuck there for 9 months without any fixed solution to return, will you ever think about getting a hair cut ?, Good thing that she was able to hold herself & not jump out of the space station with a parachute.

How I wish, we could also learn from her on how to hold on to our problems till they get solved, instead of jumping to conclusions & moving away from success.

Happy Reading !!!

Dr. Mandar Chitre
Editor & Founder – Drycotec Diaries
& Drycotec Drymortar Association

DRY MIX MORTAR PLANT

Mortar | Grout | Tile Adhesive | Black Box | Putty | Green Sand



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My D&I Diaries : Celebrating Women's Day : Introducing SHILPI CHATURVEDI

Drycotec Diaries proudly introduces **SHILPI CHATURVEDI**, a great leader & a confident business women who is selling Ready Made Plaster in Lucknow Region on the banks of Gomti & Ganga where river sand is regularly dredged to make manual plasters. She is the role model for our industry because of her grit & determination to ensure that the city gets a environmentally free and accurate product for wall plastering. Speaking with Shilpi Ma'am, I was personally very impressed & would like to share her thoughts with our readers.

Drycotec Diaries : Ma'am, tell us about your self ?

Shilpi Chaturvedi : I always dreamt of doing something different. Begins were humble and got into interiors initially but gradually moved towards construction. I had a hunch that this would be my career call. Now, with nearly a decade of struggle and experience, i am a known supplier of advanced construction material. "Today I am the only woman to be the authorised channel partner of big brands like Ultratech, Berger, Saint Gobain. All this gives me great satisfaction today for I truly believe women have tremendous inner strength.

Drycotec Diaries : Did the world full of men welcome you, or was it the other way ?

Shilpi Chaturvedi : I did encounter probing eyes, derisive comments and unhealthy atmosphere initially. Obviously, my entry into the construction sector wasn't welcomed but I was determined to succeed.

Drycotec Diaries : Certainly Ma'am, we have been meeting a few more professions in the Lucknow market, they take your name with pride. Today, everybody is appreciating your work and new players are taking entry. Drymortars is growing in UP and you are one of the pillars. Tell us more.

Shilpi Chaturvedi : I have launched my own company brand 'JKM' that offers some innovative products like Ready Mix, plaster, block and tile adhesive. We will soon launch high strength cement too.

Drycotec Diaries : Speaking about women in construction, what would be your message to other women or those who want to enter this sector ?

Shilpi Chaturvedi : Aware of the problems I faced, I decided to engage women in all prime positions in my company with 'providing solutions with trust' as its motto," she said. Besides construction, my company is now into transport and fisheries too. The IIA Lucknow chapter has taken a commendable initiative by establishing a women's cell dedicated to celebrating women entrepreneurs in our community. This endeavour not only recognizes the achievements of women in business but also fosters a supportive environment for their growth and success.

By highlighting the contributions of women entrepreneurs, the IIA Lucknow chapter inspires others, promotes gender equality, and stimulates economic empowerment. Overall, this initiative has a positive impact by encouraging diversity, innovation, and collaboration within the local business ecosystem.

Happy Women's Day to all !!!



Sanjay Chitnis, Retired Sr. Vice President (Technical Services), JK Lakshmi cement Ltd. has almost four decades of experience in the field of cement. He is an engineer from the COEP college in Pune, has done his MDI program from Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow & Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad. He has also done his MBA from Annamalai University. Mr. Chitnis is very punctual, down to earth, smart with Sound civil engineering knowledge coupled with administration & managerial capabilities. He loves writing short articles on Sundays on LinkedIn. We have taken one such very interesting article from him for the benefit of our readers.

ULTRA FINE FLY ASH STANDARDS.

The ASTM C618 specification covers Ultrafine fly ash (UFFA). According to British standards, the specification for ultra-fine fly ash is primarily covered under BS EN 450-1, S" category specifies ultra-fine fly ash. Ultrafine fly ash shall not be prepared / manufactured by grinding pulverized fuel ash, but only through classification of fly ash obtained from the cyclone separator to maintain the spherical shape of particles.

In this article, we shall discuss Indian standard IS 19058: 2024 - Ultrafine Fly Ash — Specification.

IS 3812(part 1) covers the physical and chemical requirements of pulverized fuel ash for use as pozzolana for manufacture of cement and for part replacement of cement in cement mortar & concrete.

Minimum fineness or Specific surface of ultra-fine fly ash should be 1500 m²/kg as against 320 m²/kg fly ash conforming IS 3812 (part 1)

For ultra-fine fly ash, Oversize percent retained on 45 micron IS sieve- 5 % Max as against 34 % max. for flyash conforming IS 3812 (part 1)

Ultrafine fly ash shall have the following particle size distribution (PSD) as determined by using laser diffraction PSD analyser

- 50 % of the particles on mass basis < 7 μm
- 90 % of the particles on mass basis < 15 μm

LR (Lime reactivity) of Ultra fine fly ash should be minimum 7 MPa whereas requirement of the LR for fly ash conforming IS 3812(part 1) is 4.5 Mpa

Ultrafine fly ash shall be stored similar to cement/ fly ash/silica fume/ metakaolin, depending upon the storage requirement in bags/bulk form. UFFA offers tremendous potential for developing high performance concrete mixtures, which provide superior long-term performance.

Concrete when properly designed with 5% UFFA (max. 9 %) give us significant improvements in the performance of concrete when considering alkali-silica reactivity, chloride penetration, and sulfate attack. Delhi Metro used UFFA in M 60 concrete for piers. Design mix trial shows cube compressive strength @3 days-- 61 MPa & 28 days cube comp.strength as 77 MPa (reference published data on internet).

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS IN HANDLING ULTRAFINE FLY ASH.

- When handling UFFA, you should wear hand gloves, eye glasses, and a mask.
- Avoid prolonged contact with skin or eyes.
- Wash eyes if there is contact with eyes.

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The waves crashed rhythmically against the golden shores of Ganpatipule with the sky in hues of orange and crimson. Seated on the coastline were three visionaries—Mr. Anand Watve, Mr. Atul Kulkarni, and Mr. Prashant Kanikdale. It was here, that a thought took root—why not create something that would revolutionize the construction machinery industry? They knew the Indian market needed cutting-edge, globally competitive solutions and were determined to provide them.

The journey was far from easy. The initial years were marked by challenges—navigating the complexities of manufacturing, understanding the evolving needs of the market, and competing with international giants. Yet, they persisted, introducing state-of-the-art products like Dry Mix Mortar Plants, Sand Plants, and Wall Putty Plants. RMX became synonymous with reliability and efficiency, trusted by construction giants across the nation.

The Minds Behind RMX

Mr. Anand Watve – The Operations Mastermind

Anand Watve brought with him extensive experience in business operations, supply chain management, and customer relations. His ability to streamline manufacturing processes and optimize supply chains played a vital role in RMX's ability to deliver quality products on time. Anand's leadership in managing day-to-day operations allowed the company to scale efficiently while maintaining its commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction. His business acumen and operational expertise ensured that RMX remained agile and responsive to industry demands.



Mr. Atul Kulkarni – The Strategic Visionary

A seasoned expert in construction machinery, Atul Kulkarni had always been driven by an innate curiosity for engineering and problem-solving. With years of hands-on experience in the industry, he understood market trends, customer needs, and technological advancements. His strategic mindset enabled RMX to develop robust, high-performance machinery tailored to the demands of an evolving industry. Atul's focus on long-term sustainability and global expansion helped RMX secure its position as an industry leader.



Mr. Prashant Kanikdale – The Innovator in Engineering

With a deep-rooted passion for mechanical engineering, Prashant Kanikdale was the driving force behind RMX's product innovation. Having spent years studying construction technology and manufacturing processes, he played a crucial role in designing and developing state-of-the-art machinery. His meticulous attention to detail and commitment to quality ensured that RMX's equipment not only met but exceeded global standards. Prashant's expertise allowed RMX to carve a niche in the highly competitive construction equipment industry.



The journey of RMX reached another historic moment with its successful Initial Public Offering (IPO). The overwhelming response from investors reinforced the market's confidence in RMX's vision and growth strategy. The IPO was not just a financial milestone; it was a testament to the company's credibility, innovation, and the trust it had built over the years. With this fresh infusion of capital, RMX is poised to accelerate its expansion, invest in next-generation technology, and strengthen its global presence. The Directors, with their unwavering commitment, have steered the company into a new era, making RMX one of the most promising industrial enterprises in the market today.

Today, RMX is more than just a brand; it's a testament to perseverance, innovation, and an unyielding commitment to quality. Anand, Atul, and Prashant's journey is not just about building machines—it's about building trust, relationships, and a future where Indian engineering competes on a global stage.

As RMX gears up for its next phase of growth, the story of its Directors serves as an inspiration. What started as a dream has now become an industry powerhouse, and the journey is far from over.

**This is RMX. This is innovation.
This is the future.**

My Interview Diaries : **KARAN GHELANI**

[Head – Principal Management, IMCD]



Drycotec Diaries speaks with **KARAN GHELANI, HEAD - PRINCIPAL MANAGEMENT FROM IMCD**. They are the distributors of polymers & many more products in different sectors of the industry.

After the successful acquisition of Parkash group, IMCD has played a significant role in the Dry mortar sector. The team is working towards taking the business forward with the new policies & strategies of a multinational like IMCD.

Drycotec Diaries : How do you see the business environment for 2025 for RDP and MHEC ?

Karan Ghelani : RDP and MHEC continue to be key raw materials for a wide range of dry mix applications, particularly in products like skim coats, tile adhesives, grouts, and plasters—especially under extreme weather conditions.

The market environment for RDP and MHEC in 2025 is expected to remain competitive. However, we foresee a positive impact driven by manufacturers diversifying into speciality segments such as high-performance CTA, self-levelling compounds, and waterproofing systems.

This diversification will likely accelerate growth in speciality applications and open up new avenues for value-added formulations in the construction chemicals space.

Drycotec Diaries : What are your plans for 2025 in India ?

Karan Ghelani : At IMCD, we support the dry mix segment with a comprehensive portfolio including RDP, MHEC, starch ethers, cellulose fibers, high alumina cement, iron oxides, and more. In 2025, we aim to strengthen our focus on speciality applications such as high-performance CTA, spray plasters, speciality grouts, self-levelling compounds, and waterproofing systems—while continuing to add value in traditional segments like wall putty.

In addition, IMCD is committed to supporting technological advancements by providing customers with innovative solutions and expertise that help them adopt new technologies, streamline processes, and ultimately boost efficiency.

A key part of our strategy will also be expanding our reach into Tier 2 and Tier 3 regions to enhance market penetration and support customers across geographies with our technical expertise and product solutions.

Drycotec Diaries : What according to you shall be the main challenges of 2025 ?

Karan Ghelani : India's construction landscape is evolving rapidly, fuelled by government-led infrastructure initiatives across airports, highways, railways, ports, and water management. This transformation presents opportunities for the construction chemicals industry, which plays a vital role in enhancing the performance, durability, and sustainability of modern structures.

The main challenges for 2025 are likely to include:

- Implementation of sustainable and environmentally friendly solutions
- A highly competitive market environment
- Volatility in key raw materials
- Rising working capital requirements

Navigating these challenges will require agility, innovation, and close collaboration across the value chain, along with the adoption of next-gen technologies such as advanced building materials, AI-driven construction planning, and innovations like 3D printing.

Drycotec Diaries : Tell us about your organization and your journey in Market India

Karan Ghelani : IMCD is a global leader in the distribution and formulation of speciality chemicals and ingredients, providing solutions to its partners. We operate in over 60 countries with a strength of 4,000+ employees across business groups from life sciences (pharmaceuticals, food & nutrition, beauty & personal care) and industrial (coatings & construction, advanced materials, lubricants & energy).

With a truly global presence, local market insights and in-depth technical understanding, we have the ideas and expertise to support you in developing the forward-reaching innovations of tomorrow.

Headquartered in Mumbai, IMCD India's Coatings & Construction team delivers a wide range of speciality chemicals to enhance the performance, innovation, and sustainability of construction, paints, coatings, adhesives, printing inks, textiles, leather, and paper formulations.

With laboratories in Noida and Mumbai, we not only develop market-relevant formulations but also provide resources to our customers and principals to accelerate their new projects and developments. We work with some of the world's leading brands to offer a diverse and innovative product portfolio.

For more information, please contact Karan Ghelani on karan.ghelani@imcd.in

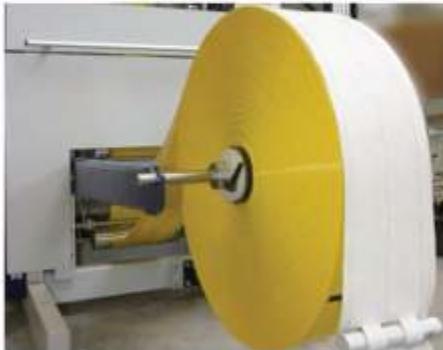


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FROM THE TUBULAR FILM TO THE PERFECT PALLET

①



The tubular film

The polyethylene bags are delivered as film (PE side gusseted tubular film) on rolls, picked up on a carrier and fed manually into the machine.

②



The printing

The versatile marking systems ensure reliable and positionally accurate printing with your individual marking. We adapt this process step exactly to the speed requirements of the machine. Empty bag printing with laser (CO₂ + fiber laser), thermal transfer or labeler and full bag printing with inkjet is optionally available.

③



The bag-scanner

The optional bag scanner scans the QR code printed on the film to ensure that the machine operator is using the correct bag roll selected for the product to be filled. QR Codes can additionally be used for product and bag tracing.

④



The bag manufacturing: corner welding and bottom seam welding

Due to the diagonal welding of the side gussets, the bag bottoms are optimally formed. Among the advantages of corner welding are improved bag geometry, higher bag strength and very good stackability. This attractive positioning options on pallets, both in terms of storage positioning options on pallets. The machine automatically adjusts to different bag lengths as soon as the corresponding data have been entered. The system variably compensates for the bag lengths. Separated by a knife the bag is open at the top.

⑤



The hexagon filling spout

The bag gripper clamps the bag chest tight to the hexagonal filling spout, resulting in a clean filling process.

⑥



The filling and bag closure

The combined MEC® control and weighing electronics – a development of HAVER & BOECKER – ensures exact filling quantities. Product compaction inside the bag is a fundamental requirement for achieving a clean and efficient final result. Inner and outer vibration compactors provide the required product compaction. The contents of the bags are efficiently compacted during filling. This reduces costs: compacted bag contents mean less volume and therefore less film.

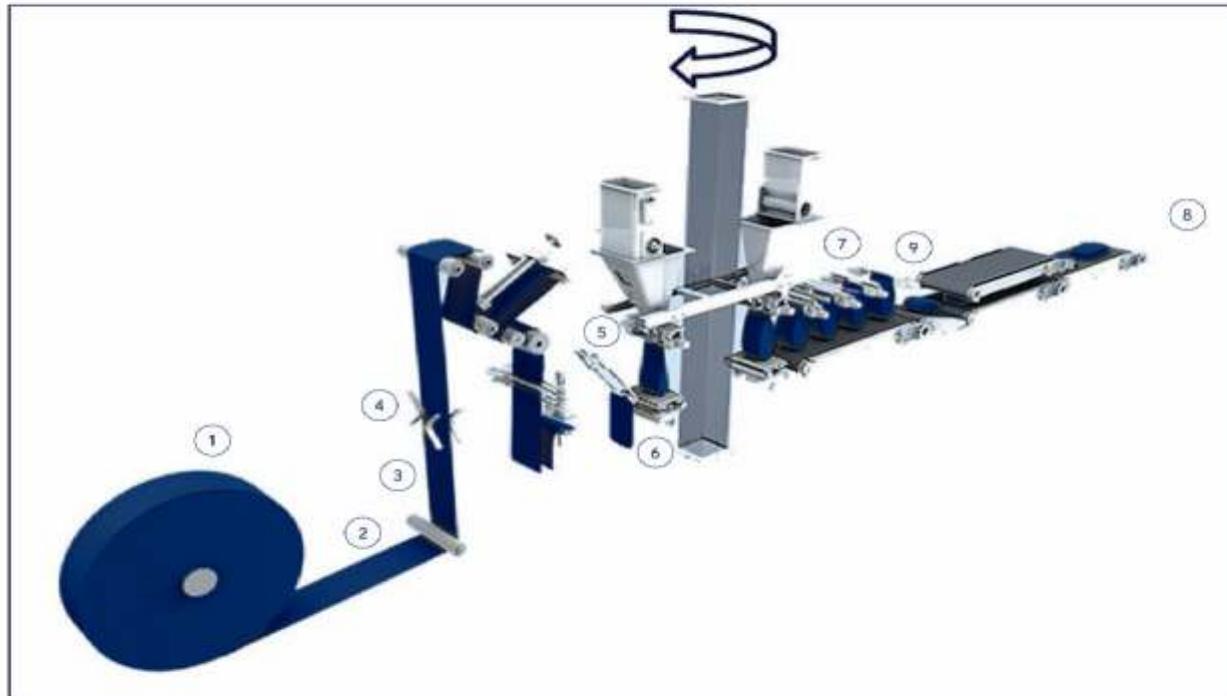
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CEMENT

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WEATHERPROOF. CLEAN. PROFITABLE.

FROM THE TUBULAR FILM TO THE PERFECT PALLET



7



The full-bag transport

The filled bags are forwarded in an upright position, closed and placed on the conveyor belt.

8



The quality control

The check-weigher for the „bag-check“ with weight and closure control.

9



The bag forming section

The belt conveyor consists of various adjustable elements, that ensure proper filling and increase process reliability. By using a pressing belt, the filled and sealed bags are formed precisely and can thus be palletized perfectly.

For more information get in touch with us at c.gundigara@haveribauindia.com

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My Cement Diaries :



MAHENDRA KUMAR MISHRA is a Veteran Cement industry professional, with over 40 years of experience in the field. Retired from Ultratech Cement Limited, Unit Birla White, as Joint Executive President and plant head in 2020. Having Worked in Lafarge Overseas, in their Asia Technical Centre in Kuala Lumpur for a decade and then in Lafarge India plant operations. Currently associated with Aqua proof as advisor for company's strategic matters. He writes his views on the Cement industry in this article.

IBEF CEMENT INDUSTRY REPORT NOVEMBER 2024 : AN ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION :

India is the second-largest producer of cement in the world. It accounts for more than 8% of the global installed capacity. India has a lot of potential for development in the infrastructure and construction sector and the cement sector is expected to largely benefit from it. Furthermore, on the back of rising rural housing demand, the consumption of cement in India has been growing consistently as it is one of the cheapest products to buy in terms of Rs./kg.

Strong expansion of the industrial sector, which has fully recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic shock, is one of the main demand drivers for the cement industry. As a result, there is a strong potential for an increase in the long-term demand for the cement industry. Some of the recent initiatives, such as the development of 98 smart cities, are expected to significantly boost the sector.

Aided by suitable Government foreign policies, several foreign players have invested in the country in the recent past. A significant factor which aids the growth of this sector is the ready availability of raw materials for making cement, such as limestone and fuel coal.

MARKET SIZE

As India has a high quantity and quality of limestone deposits throughout the country, the cement industry promises huge potential for growth. India has a total of 210 large cement plants, of which 77 are in Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu. Nearly 32% of India's cement production capacity is based in South India, 20% in North India, 13% in Central, 15% in West India, and the remaining 20% is based in East India. India's cement production reached 374.55 million tonnes in FY23, a growth rate of 6.83% year-on-year (YoY). The Indian cement sector's capacity is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4-5% over the four-year period up to the end of FY27. It would thus begin the 2028 financial year at 715-725 MT/year in installed capacity.

ROAD AHEAD

The Indian government is firmly focused on infrastructure development to spur economic growth and is striving for full infrastructure coverage to establish smart cities. The government plans to increase the capacity of railways and the facilities for handling and storage to enable the transfer of cement and cut out on transportation costs. These measures are expected to result in increased construction activity in the country, thereby boosting demand for cement.

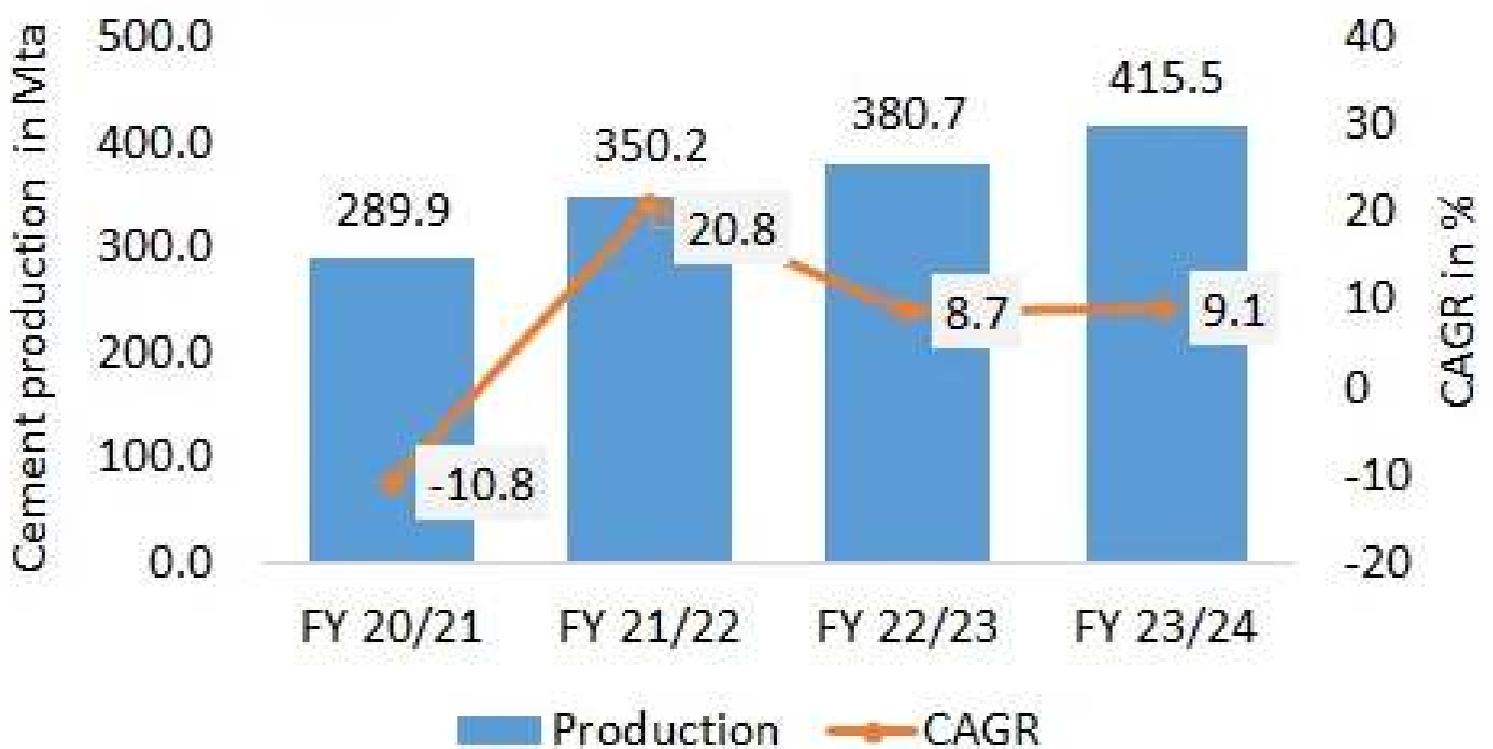
COMMENTS

The Indian cement industry is poised for robust growth, driven by infrastructure expansion, urbanization, and government initiatives like 'Housing for All' and smart cities. Rising demand, technological advancements, and sustainability efforts will further strengthen the sector, making it a key contributor to economic development.

Source and References: IBEF (India Brand Equity Foundation) Cement Industry Report November 2024

References in IBEF report: Media Reports, Press releases, Union Budget 2023-24, Edelweiss Securities Ltd., Global Cement

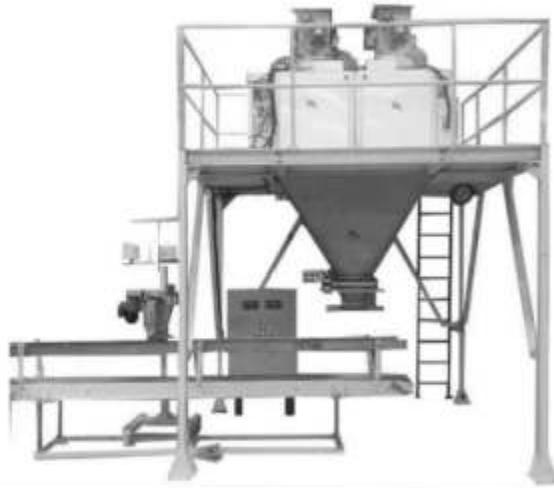
India's Cement Production FY 20/21 - FY23/24





R.S. ENTERPRISES

Bagging Machine with Twin Weigh Hopper



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Our Microprocessor Cum HMI Based Controlled bag filling machines-also bagging installations or baggers are available as standard for bags with net weights of 1 to 5 kg and from 5 to 50 kg

Bagging Machine

- ★ Type: Net Bag Filling Twin Weighing
- ★ Maximum Output 600 bags/hours
- ★ Weighing: 20 kgs. & 40 kgs Or as per requirement
- ★ Feeder Type Twin Screw Feeder Twin Screw System
- ▶ Weigh hopper mounted on load cell - 2 Nos
- ▶ Dump Hopper with Pneumatically operated Bag Clamp. - 1 No
- ▶ Microprocessor Based Controller, Electrical Panel for Feeder & HMI System
- ▶ Bag Filling Machine comprising of Screw feeders for coarse & fine feed-2 Nos
- ▶ Stitching Machine with Conveyor - Single head Stitching Machine with 4 Mtr. Long Belt Conveyor with drive and drive parts



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My HR Diaries :
The Skill Crisis in Cement Manufacturing :
A Threat We Can't Ignore



Dr. S. B. Hegde can be introduced as Professor, Ex President - Manufacturing (Cement Industry), Global Consultant / Advisor, Domain Expert in Cement in International Bodies and Recipient of the prestigious "Global Visionary Award" (2020). He is a Seasoned, Global and Accomplished Cement Industry Professional, 3 decades of experience with demonstrated history of working both in and outside India.

Drycotec Diaries : What is the crises that you are thinking about, please let us know ?

Dr. S.B. Hegde : I have been observing Globally that the cement industry is facing a massive skill gap, and it's putting growth and sustainability at serious risk. As older workers retire, young talent isn't stepping up—mainly because cement jobs seem dull compared to IT and tech roles. In India alone, while IT firms hired 1.5 million graduates in 2023, cement attracted just 50,000. Despite decent starting salaries of ₹8–12 lakh per year, 70% of engineering students still see cement work as unappealing. Meanwhile, new technologies like AI, robotics, data analytics, IOTs, automation systems and green cement processes demand skilled man power. Globally, 80% of cement production now uses advanced dry processes, but only a small fraction of workers are trained to handle them. As a result, projects like India's \$14.59 billion infrastructure plan and carbon-neutral targets for 2070 are at risk.

Drycotec Diaries : We understand your views & would like to know what's the way forward?

Dr. S.B. Hegde : Certainly, I will make some suggestions to express the way forward to handle this challenge and help reduce it.

- Learning & Development : Companies must go beyond profit and invest in training and collaboration. This would be very helpful to increase the knowledge levels.
- Catch them Young : Partnering with engineering colleges, offering scholarships, and pooling training resources can make a difference.
- From the Government : Governments can support with tax breaks for skill development, just like Germany does.

Drycotec Diaries : Really good suggestions sir, how can we proceed with the implementations of these ideas, who will take the initiative, who will drive the mission, we need some more thought processing from your side please.

Dr. S.B. Hegde : Mostly, without urgent action, we risk crumbling the very foundation of progress. Our entire growth is dependent on it. I'm preparing a detailed research-based article on this critical issue, which will be published soon.

Drycotec Diaries is interested in getting more information on this topic and invite our readers to share their views on the subject of manpower resourcing.

Companies

Smaller Cities with the Buzz Draw Realtors, Homebuyers

Tier-2 & Tier-3 cities account for nearly half of land acquisitions by developers in 2024: Study

Kallash Babar

Mumbai: India's real estate market is silently witnessing a significant shift, with tier-2 and tier-3 cities emerging as key players in shaping the sector's future. No longer overshadowed by metropolitan hubs, these cities are attracting substantial investments from developers and homebuyers alike.

The growing appeal stems from a combination of affordability, infrastructure development, and improved connectivity, making them attractive destinations for both residential and commercial expansion.

A total of 60 cities accounted for 44% of the 3,294 acres of land acquired by developers during the year gone by, underscoring the growing importance in the industry, showed a Credai-Liases Foras joint study. This trend signals a change in investment focus, as developers recognise the potential of these regions in driving long-term growth.

"Tier-2 and tier-3 cities are the cornerstone of India's next phase of urbanisation, driving inclusive growth and economic diversifica-



tion. These cities now account for nearly half of all land acquisitions by developers, signalling a seismic shift in investment patterns," said Manoj Gaur, chairman, Credai. Housing sales rose 20% on-year to 681,138 units across 60 cities. The primary market hit ₹7.5 lakh crore in sales, growing 43%. Luxury and ultra-luxury housing led the momentum, with premium markets ensuring balanced supply-demand, pushing luxury sales to 71% of the total value.

"India's real estate sector is undergoing a paradigm shift, with tier-

er-2 and tier-3 cities playing a central role in urban expansion. As these cities become economic and industrial hubs, there is an increasing demand for affordable and mid-segment housing. Developers are recognizing this shift, leading to a surge in investments and new projects," said Boman Irani, President, Credai.

Properties priced between ₹1-₹2 crore saw a 52% surge in sales, with 132,532 apartments sold. The ultra-luxury segment with over ₹2 crore experienced an even sharper rise of 73%, highlighting deve-

lopers' confidence in catering to high-net-worth buyers.

The Indian real estate sector is now valued at ₹22.5 lakh crore, contributing 7.2% to the country's economy. While metro cities continue to dominate premium housing sales, the rising prominence of tier-2 and tier-3 cities is reshaping market dynamics.

These cities are increasingly serving as academic, logistics, and industrial hubs, creating new housing demands. Enhanced urbanisation, coupled with government initiatives such as the prime minister's Gati Shakti mission, is strengthening connectivity between satellite towns and major metropolitan centers, unlocking fresh growth opportunities.

Cities such as Lucknow, Jaipur, and Bhubaneswar are witnessing steady price appreciation, reinforcing their market strength. Additionally, the affordable housing segment remains a critical driver of growth. The priority sector lending (PSL) category, covering homes priced under ₹30 lakh, along with the ₹30-₹50 lakh segment, continues to attract first-time homebuyers and investors.

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Cement Cos Roll Back Price Hikes to Boost Volumes Amid Muted Demand

Move comes even as firm petcoke prices weigh on margins; input costs may rise going ahead: Analysts

Nikita Periwal

Mumbai: Cement players across the country have been unable to hold on to the price hike introduced earlier this month, as they looked to push volumes. Prices have been rolled back even as fuel costs have been rising, and this could impact operating margins in the seasonally strong March quarter, analysts said.

For cement producers, power and fuel typically account for 22-24% of the production cost, of which petcoke is typically around 15%. The average international prices of petcoke have risen by 13% sequentially in this quarter, while prices in the domestic market are up by 10%.

"Most companies will be impacted by the rise in petcoke prices, but it is difficult to single out who will be hit the most," Mangesh Bhadang of Centrum Broking said. "Companies like ACC and Sagar Cement will be better insulated because they use a higher proportion of domestic coal."

Cement makers have the option to choose between coal and petcoke as fuel, either from the domestic market or imported. While petcoke finds higher usage due to its relatively lower cost, its recent prices have made it more expensive than coal.

"It may not be possible for all the cement companies to shift completely

Fuel Woes

Cement prices were hiked for fourth month in a row in March

International petcoke prices up 13% QoQ, domestic prices by 10%

Cement producers likely to see mid-single digit volume growth in FY25

Coal is now cheaper than petcoke in domestic market

Power and fuel account for 22-24% of production costs, while petcoke accounts 15%

DIFFICULT TO SWITCH

While petcoke finds higher usage due to its relatively lower cost, its recent prices have made it more expensive than coal

to coal in the short term, particularly for companies having poor quality of limestone," Ravi Sodah of Elara Securities said. The higher cost of petcoke and depreciation of the rupee are likely to increase costs for cement makers, he said.

The availability of coal in India is also an issue, Bhadang said. Companies also stock up on fuel inventory for several weeks, which makes it difficult to switch for a short period, he said.

This rise in petcoke prices comes at a time when the industry's performance has been weak compared with the last two-three years. The current fiscal, for instance, has seen high competitive intensity within the sector and lower

spending on infrastructure by the government. As a result, demand for cement grew by just 3.5% year-on-year between April and December. While volumes are expected to see double-digit increase in the March quarter, the overall volume growth for year is expected to be closer to mid-single digits.

This has also weighed on the prices of building materials for most of the year. While the recent recovery in prices has brought the current prices above the exit price of the December quarter, prices remain flat to marginally lower as compared with the previous year.

In March, prices were raised for the fourth consecutive month with an increase of ₹10-30 per bag. This, though, had to be rolled back by up to ₹10 per bag, said dealers. Cement prices remain particularly weak in the southern markets and relatively better in the eastern markets.

Although cement prices remained weak through most of the year and volumes were relatively lower, earnings of cement producers were cushioned by easing petcoke costs, a relief which will be absent in the March quarter.





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