

# Packaging

## SOUTH ASIA

The Magazine for Modern Packaging



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UFlex CMD Chaturvedi releases report at PPRDC Roundtable in Delhi

## Recyclability of Multi-Layered Aseptic Packaging

Naresh Khanna

On 13 September 2023, the chairman and managing director of Noida-headquartered UFlex, Ashok Chaturvedi, released a study report on the Recyclability of Multi-Layered Aseptic Packaging at a special roundtable organized by the Plastics Packaging Research and Development Centre (PPRDC) in New Delhi. The report was unveiled in the presence of Deepak Mishra, joint secretary, Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals, Government of India, Professor (Dr) Shishir Sinha, DG-CIPET and brand owners and industry experts from across the country deliberating the future of recycling and the Indian government's EPR guidelines.

On the occasion, Chaturvedi said, "We welcome the government's initiatives toward clean India as it is a stepping-stone for a clean planet. As a global leader in packaging, we have made significant investments in industrial and multi-layer mixed plastic (MLP) waste recycling facilities across our global locations and very recently, in multi-layer aseptic recycling technology."

"Historically, multi-layer aseptic packaging is considered 'non-recyclable' as the packaging structures are made of a mix of materials such as paper, polyethylene, and aluminium foil. Multi-layer aseptic packaging mostly ends up in landfills or is incinerated. UFlex has invested in an advanced Enzymatic Delamination Technology to enable aseptic packaging recycling. Enzymatic delamination utilizes enzymes to break down the bonding between different layers of the packaging materials, allowing for the separation of individual layers of the laminate such as paper, polyethylene and foil which can be reused in the production of new products. UFlex has set up a



*Study Report on the Recycling of Aseptic Packaging released joint by Deepak Mishra, joint secretary GOI, Ashok Chaturvedi, CMD UFlex, Professor Shishir Sinha, DG CIPET and Jeevaraj Pillai CSO UFlex. Photo UFlex*

state-of-the-art aseptic packaging recycling facility in Gwalior and would like to invite brand owners, civic bodies, NGOs, and recyclers to visit our facilities and learn more about this technology."

"This report will help brand owners and recyclers appreciate the technical processes, possibilities, and financial returns on recycling multi-layer aseptic plastic (MLAP) waste. In a country like India, this could provide a direction for the treatment of aseptic plastic waste in a sustainable manner and bring circularity in aseptic packaging."

"While we have invested our own time and money, and developed technology to pave the way for recycling in India, we believe that adequate regulatory support in creating the right environment to boost recycling is the need of the hour. Often, a well-drafted law accelerates the pace of change like nothing else."

The release of the report was followed by an address on 'Aseptic Liquid Packaging – Opportunities and Challenges' by Ashwini Sharma, president and CEO, Aseptic Liquid Packag-

ing Business of UFlex. Sharma stated, "We recognize the critical role of aseptic packaging in our modern economy, and we are committed to driving innovation that aligns sustainability with economic progress. Our advanced enzymatic delamination technology is a testament to our investment and commitment to highly efficient, technologically advanced, and sustainable practices."

Additionally, Sharma showcased UFlex's advanced aseptic recycling facility at Gwalior which upcycles aseptic packaging waste into several industrial and daily-use items. A presentation on Recycling of MLP (Category III) – Recycling Methods by Jeevaraj Pillai, chief sustainability officer, UFlex and a Trustee of the PPRDC, and enzymologist Dr Paijit Sangchai followed. Vikas Garg from AA Garg and Company presented on Meeting the EPR guidelines for MLP (Category – III). Other speakers included Secretary General, and Coordinator, PPRDC, Mihir Banerjee and Manas Sarkar, Business HR head, and Sustainability Lead, Packaging Business, UFlex, and a Council Member of the PPRDC. ■

Ashish Saxena on packaging and its positive impact on society

## Innovative and sustainable solutions from Uflex at Hiplax 2023

**M**ultinational flexible packaging and solutions company UFlex displayed its latest line of coated PET products with transparent and high-barrier properties, post-consumer recycled (PCR) films, and biodegradable films at Hiplax 2023 in Hyderabad in August.

Highlighting the key features of coated PET products, Ashish Saxena, joint president of the packaging films business of UFlex, said, "These are water-based coatings with little or no volatile organic content and excellent oxygen barrier properties. As compared to other ways of achieving high-barrier properties in transparent films such as physical vapor deposition of metal oxides such as AlOx, and SiOx, by surface coating PVOH, PVDC, or by laminating PET films with EVOH-PE films, UFlex's proprietary coated transparent BOPET films deliver better oxygen barrier, shelf life, consistency, lamination bond, humidity resistance and cost benefits".

During the exhibition, the company showcased the latest transparent barrier films –ULP, XLP, and ECOPET – which have different oxygen and water vapor barrier properties and price points to meet diverse customer needs. This innovation enables food companies to display their products in a transparent format, ensuring excellent visibility and extended shelf life.

The company also showcased its environment-friendly and recyclable heat-sealable and peelable film. This heat-sealable and peelable film (F-WSP) is a high-quality mono-material solution (PET-based) for use as a lidding film on APET & RPET containers. It is sealed using heat and can be effortlessly peeled open without facing the hassles of spillage of food contents, the company said.

### Regional dynamics

During the interaction, Saxena highlighted the Dharwad plant in Karnata-

ka as a strategic investment by UFlex to meet customer requirements in southern India. "We are here to serve our customers locally and give them the best possible service, quality, and innovation," he said.

Saxena said the southern market is different from others and requires tailored products and solutions. "There's always some difference from region to region. If we take the consumption patterns in southern India, there is a high demand for food items such as confectionery, take away food, etc., and this means the share of metalized film in the southern region is a lot higher".

"Hiplax 2023 offered an ideal platform for UFlex to meet potential customers from the southern region and make them aware of our manufacturing presence in Dharwad," he added.

### Plastic issue

"The biggest challenge that we face as an industry is the perception that all plastics are harmful to the environment. But the reality is different. Rather than nullifying plastics, we must use them responsibly," said Saxena.

Saxena lauded the government for having a very progressive view on the implementation of plastic regulation. "Instead of a knee-jerk reaction of banning all kinds of plastic, the Indian government and regulators have been astute about banning select single-use plastics where sustainable alternatives are available and regulated the rest through a comprehensive Extend Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework that emphasizes collection, recycling, and use of recycled content in packaging".

UFlex is going beyond its EPR commitments laid down for packaging producers and other plastic products. "Our ongoing efforts extend to the establishment of recycling infrastructure. Notably, we have had a multi-layer mixed plastic recycling plant at our



Noida facility for nearly three decades, adept at recycling rigid plastics and laminate waste from consumers and industrial processes. We have expanded this initiative to Poland and Mexico, where we have set up similar post-consumer recycling units," Saxena said.

"We have seamlessly integrated sustainability into our corporate strategy at UFlex, driven by an ambitious target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2035. Working toward this goal, we are actively striving to enhance the incorporation of recycled content in our products. Our portfolio encompasses a robust selection of sustainable films, a notable example being the Asclepius brand, which features a film comprising up to 100% recycled content," Saxena said. ■

– Rajesh Kumar

Indian brand owners and packaging producers reveal their ambition

## Elite in Mumbai addresses sustainability

As the large mass of the Indian and global plastic and flexible packaging community gathered again in Mumbai on the first day of the tenth Elite Global Summit on Specialty Films and Flexible Packaging on 31 August, the keynote speakers began the day extolling the current and projected strength of the Indian economy, and with technical insights that addressed the inevitably increasing use of plastic and the imperative of its recyclability.

Naresh Khanna

On the first day, the keynotes and discussions encompassed both mechanical and chemical recycling that generally lean on solutions based on single polymer structures and multi-layer plastics, respectively. While the discussion has become both complex and more urgent, there are two outstanding takeaways from the first day. The first is that the solutions are beyond any singularity and require collaboration between brand owners, converters, and suppliers of equipment, technology and consumables. Secondly, as the retired Ministry of Environment and Forests secretary CK Mishra forthrightly said, it is largely up to the packaging community, and specifically those participating in this conference, to solve the problem.

The time for finger-pointing and whataboutry is over, he suggested, and the time for action is the immediate now. The knowledge, talent, and resources are present at the conference – while no amount of wishful thinking of improving municipal waste collection is likely to happen anytime soon. His call to action suggested that not only must the industry lead in the entire and holistic solution of plastic waste handling and recycling but that it stands to profit immensely from the investments it will have to make to do this. Mishra ended his forceful presentation by saying that he was talking about return on investment or ROI in the hope that this would arouse and



CK Mishra, ex-secretary Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, speaking at the Elite Conference in Mumbai on 31 August 2023. Photo PSA



Ashok Chaturvedi delivering a keynote address at the 10th Elite Conference on Flexible Films and Packaging. Photo PSA



Prabha Narasimhan, managing director and CEO of Colgate-Palmolive India. Photo PSA

## FLEXIBLE PACKAGING

motivate the entrepreneurial instincts of the participants more than any other of their well-meaning interests.

Ashok Chaturvedi, the chairman of UFlex, is always a forceful speaker and industry advocate. Moreover, apart from championing the use of mixed polymer laminates or multi layer plastics – and the imminent viability of chemical recyclability, he too in his keynote, issued the call for structured action and collaboration. He openly decried the self-congratulatory reliance of the industry on destitute rag-pickers for plastic waste collection.

Questioning this misguided reliance on unorganized resources as if it was some kind of charitable activity, he forcefully stated, "This is not the way to create jobs." The industry must go deeper into the science of polymers using artificial intelligence and enzymes for devising new structures and for the collection and sorting of plastic waste on an industrial scale.

Chaturvedi spoke of his company's success in separating the paper from aseptic liquid packaging carton waste laminates where the resulting pulp can be used for making paper for other applications. He spoke of the need to up the scale and effort in producing biodegradable films and laminates. "By adding enzyme-based masterbatches the resulting structures can be made biodegradable, and even if not collected and recycled, these would turn into bio-mass," he explained, adding, "Of course, the first choice is recycling but biodegradable plastics address the problem of uncollected packaging waste which is a reality that has to be acknowledged."

The brand owners were equally knowledgeable, forceful, and action-oriented in their presentations. Prabha Narasimhan, the chairman and managing director of Colgate-Palmolive India, cited the increase in wealth of Indian households and the inevitable rise in consumption including plastic packaging. "Packaging needs to evolve," she said, suggesting that packaging needs to create engagement and excitement. It needs to do more and drive access by coming up with sustainable small packs at nominal price points. "Sustainability is expensive," she said. Citing her own company's partnership in the Accelerator +100 program, she asked, "How can we catalyze partnerships and collaborations?"

In a way, Harsh Mariwala substantially answered the questions that both Mishra and Narasimhan raised. Speaking of the Marico Innovation Foundation and its successful actions in just the past two years since it was initiated, he outlined both the groundwork that the foundation has already done by investing in scientifically quantifying the problem published and widely available several months ago and then in finding, encouraging and investing in Indian startups that have come up with solutions.

By the beginning of 2023, the Marico Innovation Foundation had already found and recognized 15 startups or small companies with practical and viable solutions. Mariwala cited three of these including Ishitva Robotic Systems' automated system that is able to sort 6 tons of plastic waste an hour at half the price of imported systems. He spoke of Lucro which has developed post-consumer resins and Zero Circle a company that has developed bio-compostable and water-dissolving plastics from seaweed. He spoke of the foundation's intent to adopt a non-metro city and help it sort waste at source and become a zero-landfill pilot example and case study.

There were several presentations throughout the first day of the Elite conference that continued to address the challenges of plastic waste in packaging, and the actions undertaken in India and other parts of Asia. Some of the pilot programs are being duplicated with efficiencies that are exponential. While Mishra exhorted the industry to act together for its own profit, Mariwala openly invited investment and collaboration in any of the startups already unearthed and others, proving that indeed the solutions are already right there in the same room and that there are really no excuses for either delay or inaction. ■



*Harsh Mariwala, Founder and chairman Marico delivering one of the keynotes at Elite. Photo PSA*

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## Embedded overt and covert features for effective anti-counterfeiting

### UFlex holograms with added security features

Counterfeit products are a matter of concern to product manufacturers and consumers. The Indian packaging industry is also hunting for – and providing effective solutions to tackle counterfeiters, who are also getting smarter. UFlex's holography division sheds some light on why and how fake products take up market space, and how it aims at developing and marketing holographic products and solutions that offer brand enhancement, value addition, and enhanced aesthetics in packaging.

According to Yogesh Kapur, the Noida-based company's executive vice-president of the holography business, the company is providing services and solutions by leveraging the best technology, in-house production, and an R&D division for each of UFlex's processes. India is becoming a preferred supplier for global buyers of products, including anti-counterfeiting and brand building solutions.

"India is at the cusp of growth, and from what we can see, a lot of global companies are trying to be a part of it. UFlex is well-positioned to tap this growing market with its country-wide footprint, by providing the latest technology for anti-counterfeiting, and brand recognition," Kapur said in an interaction with *Packaging South Asia*. "Global providers, when they come to India, are concerned about their IP because of counterfeiting. This is where UFlex holography anticounterfeiting and branding solutions come in and ensure that their IP is protected and genuine products reach their (brand owners') customers."

"We are no longer willing to be followers; we want to be the leaders," Kapur says. "Developing products and solutions to turn imagination into a reality is what UFlex is all about, backed by our full-fledged R&D. We are concerned about the counterfeiters as the life of branded products is getting shorter. Counterfeiters can catch up



*Yogesh Kapur, vice-president of UFlex holography business, sheds some light on why and how fake products take up market space*

with the processes. Textiles, cosmetics, perfume, liquor, food, and pharma brands are all at risk, and we provide solutions that enable the customer to differentiate between fake and authentic products.

#### How counterfeiters get in

A customer wanting to buy an authentic product feels cheated if his or her purchase is a counterfeit. "eCommerce has in some cases enabled the intervention of counterfeiters," says Kapur. "A product now has more pit-stops after it is shipped from the warehouse. Tampering has become more convenient, wherein the original product gets replaced by a counterfeit and later sold elsewhere. A customer may not always be able to identify if a product is real or fake just by a glance. Moreover, a bad experience will always lead to a drop in current and future sales."

According to Kapur, price-competition is also part of the problem. "The problem gets worse when we see a product similar to the original on a website, but cheaper, and we purchase it without a second thought. What fi-

nally lands at our place, if it is a shirt, is of low quality and not as comfortable as we expected. Fabric bleeding is among the most common problems in textile products. If the food or beverages we consume are fake, we can't even pinpoint what problems it could cause. The concerns are becoming more tangible and the time to act is now," he said.

Offering hyper-competitive solutions was a common practice in the packaging industry but the providers are realizing that what comes cheap is even easier for counterfeiters to duplicate. Technology, methodology, and sustainable practices are gaining traction. Kapur feels if value-proposition replaces cost-effectiveness with technology at its center, the counterfeiters can be stopped. "A hologram today is different from what it was a couple of years ago. But the counterfeiters are also catching up fast. A hologram can be replicated unless you add certain security features – which are both overt and covert."

#### Incorporating the right technology

Kapur says UFlex has the resources to develop any hologram with its significant manufacturing advantage, through inhouse backward integration of major raw material suppliers. And if they can do it so easily, there are chances that even the counterfeiters might be able to catch up. So, uniqueness is of utmost significance, he said. "The industrialists know that holograms authenticate a product but often choose cost-effective solutions – unknowingly enabling counterfeiters to easily replicate them. UFlex has always tried to be ahead of the curve when it comes to providing unique and innovative solutions. Since all products are different, their treatment should be targeted as well. And this is why we are always ahead in technology. ■

– Aayush Pandey