

An Expert
Seal
Manufacturer
in India

SEALMATIC

India : PROVIDING A ROBUST SEALING SUPPORT SYSTEM

Umar AK Balwa
Managing Director

*“We have demonstrated
that a desire followed with
determination wins the right to be
termed a vision”*

Cover Story



Over the previous five decades, international firms have dominated the mechanical seal business. The mechanical seal manufacturing method necessitates high precision design and production, which was not accessible in the early stages. Over time, the industry's capabilities improved dramatically, paving the way for the incorporation of cutting-edge technology in all industrial fields, including oil and gas, refinery, power, petrochemical, chemical, pharmaceutical, fertiliser, pulp and paper, shipping, and aerospace, creating a massive demand for high precision mechanical seals.

Mechanical seals are intended to keep hazardous media from leaking into the environment. As a result, more stringent laws made it obligatory for industrial companies to use mechanical seals on all rotational machinery. The mechanical seal industry was only about USD 300 million in the early 1980s, but it has since risen tremendously to USD 3.5 billion. Electricity, steel, refinery products, crude oil, coal, cement, natural gas, and fertiliser are the world's most important industries. These industries have a significant influence on the global economy, which will be the primary driver of growth in the mechanical seal business.

One company that is leading in the mechanical seal business dynamically is **Sealmatic India Pvt. Ltd.** It has a significant position in this market; its mechanical seals are sold to over 47 countries and are as well acknowledged as one of the industry's leading brands. Domestically, it is unrivalled in its offers; the organisation delivers a whole package to its

“Sealmatic collaborates with its customers to ensure the safety and management of its operations.”

customers worldwide, from mechanical seal selection through installation and staff training at the end-user premises. It is the chosen vendor for many projects in the core industrial sector throughout the world because of the knowledge and application-based solutions it delivers for critical equipments.

Fulfilling Expectations

Customers in this industry have high expectations for dependability, application know-how, and swift after-sales and servicing. The mechanical seal sector is very competitive in terms of technology. Before serving a customer's application, it is necessary to have a proven track record; hence, it is critical to develop a mechanical seal for a particular application. Every mechanical seal manufactured is custom-made to meet the specific needs of the customer.

Sealmatic is prepared, and it is the only domestic firm that has spent enormously in R&D, design, quality control, and production. It has a specialised staff of 26 engineers who are solely responsible for building customised solutions for customers worldwide. The team at Sealmatic is glad to say that it is the only Indian mechanical seal company with API Q1, ATEX, RoHS, REACH and EU FDA certification for mechanical seals. Furthermore, as a domestic mechanical seal manufacturer, it is the only one that employs FEA and CFD for essential designing & development of mechanical seals. Its customers benefit from the massive data that it brings to the table in terms of application know-how, troubleshooting, and failure analysis based on its over 32 years of expertise in this industry. This is the key to success in this highly competitive industry.





“We became one of India’s most successful mechanical seal firms”

Uniquely Diverse

Mechanical seals are a highly competitive industry. Achieving a given level necessitates a significant investment of time, money, and energy. When Sealmatic first opened its doors in 2011, it made a concerted effort to build up its factory following worldwide standards and specifications by deploying hardware and software and adopting international standards and a highly trained team. The team at Sealmatic is delighted to say that it has had over 100 foreign clients visit its facilities, and they have all described the organisation as a ‘state of the international art facility.’

Furthermore, though the company would like not to, if it was to compare itself to other domestic players, the answer to this issue would be unequivocal that it has marched leagues ahead of the domestic competition. The company has all of the certifications that no other domestic company has, such as API Q1, ATEX, and FDA. In addition, when it comes to R&D, it has invested in cutting-edge test rigs that fulfil API 682 criteria.

The cost of these test rigs can sometimes exceed the price of a small mechanical seal manufacturer. Unlike any other organisation in India in the industry, Sealmatic has built-in FEA and CFD skills. The company has tools

like MSD (Mechanical Seal Dictionary), SSG (Seal Selection Guide), AKH (Application Know How), and many others that have propelled Sealmatic worldwide as a leading solution provider. It is recognised and appreciated across the world as a high-quality mechanical seal manufacturer.

Innovation at its Best

As previously said, the business of mechanical seals necessitates application know-how, which is gained through years of diverse expertise in this highly demanding market. It has spent over 32 years in this high-octane profession, which necessitates thinking outside the box in order to deliver solutions for highly challenging and sophisticated sealing applications. The organisation’s expertise is in designing and manufacturing heavy duty mechanical seals for pumps, compressors, agitators, and other rotating equipment.

Requirements, where the pressure rating exceeds 100 kg/cm², temperatures in excess of 350 degrees Celsius, extremely high slurry content, high viscosity media, and so on, have been conceived and developed as specialist products through the years to satisfy the aforementioned demanding applications. These are not only complex to design and manufacture,

but they are also challenging to install in rotary equipment with such uses. This has been accomplished because of the vast data bank that Sealmatic has amassed over the last 32 years, which allows it to match such challenging applications to previous work.

Furthermore, it utilises the best raw materials imported from Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom. The company makes no compromises when it comes to metallurgy. Its heavy-duty mechanical seals are used in oil and gas, offshore platforms, pipeline booster pumps, heavy-duty slurry pumps, high-pressure agitators in chemical plants, high-temperature rotating equipment in refineries, and a variety of other applications.

Gearing up for Future

Long-term business success is mainly determined by the calibre of the team providing leadership, direction, and vision. Sealmatic’s vision for the future is to be at the forefront of the mechanical seal industry on a worldwide scale. The company presently supplies to over 47 countries and intends to be physically present with sales and support centres on every continent. It wishes to be the chosen option for mechanical seals among a wide range of consumers throughout the world.

The organisation is always investing in highly skilled personnel, the best software and hardware, and the most up-to-date technologies to enhance its designs and processes. In a nutshell, it is making an investment in the future. Sealmatic’s sealing technology displays a high level of dependability, safety, and cost-effectiveness. Its remarkable reputation for developing and creating bespoke solutions is well-known around the world. [\[2\]](#)

Into the Journal

In the words of Umar AK Balwa, Managing Director – Sealmatic India

My foray into the mechanical seal's industry happened by coincidence. After graduating from the University of Bombay (as Mumbai was known back then) in 1988, I intended to leave my family's real estate and hospitality company to establish a garment manufacturing unit in the city of Bombay. Bombay was formerly one of the leading export centres for ready-made clothing to Europe and the United States. Unfortunately, after initially expressing enthusiasm and support for my independent clothing export company proposal, my father decided against it. Much to my dismay, and despite spending a significant amount of time speaking with him, my efforts to persuade him bore no fruit.

I was depressed, deceived, and sulked for several weeks. While I was ruminating, my older brother Hussein Balwa decided to get into the mechanical seal industry, naming his company A K Engineering after our father, Abdul Karim Balwa, whose initials it carried. It was a modest engineering firm. Much to my dismay, I had never heard of this field of employment before, nor was I familiar with its market or operation.

On May 18, 1989, while I was sitting idle—my daily routine back then—because I had become redundant and had no work other than performing menial jobs for my father and older brothers, who thought I was wasting my time and being unproductive, they announced to me: I was to report to A K Engineering every day beginning May 19, 1989, at 9:00 a.m. The Indian

family system, with all its splendour and stability, is not without problems. When your father declared a course of action, it was set in stone, and there was little choice but to follow it.

I had to accept this unglamorous offer, which fell short of my expectations when contrasted to the glamorous industry of ready-made clothing. There, I had fantasised about socialising with young models and the who's who of the fashion world, but in fact, I had no choice but to report to A K Engineering at 9:00 a.m. the next day. As a result, on May 19, 1989, I arrived at the office and began my 'Mechanical Seals' business voyage.

I started in the mechanical seal industry when I was 22 years old. It was a very different world from my family's real estate and hospitality enterprises, which were pretty much fixed in stone and with which I was accustomed. The first and most essential thing I learned about the mechanical seal industry was how tough it is to develop, manufacture, and sell! I was thrust into a turbulent sea full of problems that I didn't know how to navigate. I worked alone and performed everything in the firm, from drafting letters of solicitation to clients to procuring raw materials, and my responsibilities even included hunting down late-paying customers.

After meeting reputable clients like KSB, Sulzer, Ebara, and many others, I quickly recognised that unless and until my firm received a solid technological backup from a known

mechanical seal manufacturer in Europe or the United States, I would be wasting my time in this industry. The world was different back then; information was holy and hidden, and there was no widely available data source from which I could obtain the names of reputable multinational corporations with whom to partner.

In Bombay, I went to a technical bookstore and asked the proprietor if he had a book on mechanical seals. He nodded and told me to return to his business in two weeks. He claimed he could get me a book about seals, but he couldn't and wouldn't guarantee the contents. Furthermore, he was doubtful if it would be of any benefit to me. I was desperate, so I took a chance and bought the book from him. He requested a full advance from me. To my chagrin, I had to pay Rs 2200/-, a hefty sum in those days, especially for a book about mechanical seals! I was worried and wondering if my bet would pay off.

I finally got my hands on the book I had ordered after four weeks of waiting and multiple phone calls to the bookstore. Elsevier Publishers dubbed it Seals and Sealing Handbook. That book transformed my mechanical seal company. Burgmann, John Crane, Crane Packing, Flexibox, Pacific, Safematic, Borg Warner, Sealol, Durametallic, Eagle, Pillar, and many more became familiar to me. It broadened my horizons and enabled me to reach out to these excellent mechanical sealing firms. I wrote to every corporation whose name and



address was featured in that book, and I followed up with bothering phone calls.

I can honestly state that I was frequently met with quite nasty and terse responses since it was difficult for a firm in Europe or the United States to comprehend the need for and urgency of establishing a mechanical seal company in India.

Understandably so, because the Indian economy had not yet opened up, and no one was interested in the possibilities that lay ahead for any such foreign enterprise in India. The Indian market was seen as highly protected, with excessive bureaucracy and a slew of other issues that made it unappealing for a corporation to establish a joint venture in India. Finally, my hard work, patience, and dedication were rewarded.

I recall reading and re-reading the fax from Burgmann dated March 12, 1993, which stated, “We have received your proposal of a joint venture together with other documentation to produce mechanical seals in India.” We will be visiting your office in Bombay shortly to evaluate your organisation and other candidates, as well as to discuss the topic in depth.”

I was on a high; my delight had no boundaries, and I was acting as if I had already signed the joint venture agreement with German Feodor Burgmann. Burgmann’s crew came to meet us in Bombay. Other qualified candidates had worked in the mechanical seal sector for longer than I had. In reality, we were the youngest firm, founded in 1989, whereas the other candidates had been in the mechanical seal industry since the 1970s. I needed to put my best foot forward and provide a severe

presentation. I had to give it my all because this was my one opportunity.

Other worldwide mechanical seal businesses were not interested in establishing a joint venture in India, which I was aware of. The drama was high-octane and suspenseful, with the pendulum occasionally swinging in my favour and mostly in favour of the

*“Each employee
is proud to be
a part of
this adventure
and the
organisation”*

other applicants. Nonetheless, I was adamant about having this joint venture, but so were the other candidates. As it turned out, I almost didn’t get the job because Feodor Burgmann opted to go with another candidate who they thought was more fit than our firm. I was heartbroken, but my inner soul, which never dies, urged me to keep my hopes alive and to beg for a miracle. And it did occur! God showered me with his kindness and blessings. Their last conversations with the other candidate did not go well, and that is when I jumped at the chance. The Joint Venture’s signing ceremony was slated for November 10, 1993. On

November 5, 1993, after passing immigration, I was hailed and received by my elder brother at the Munich Airport meeting area. That was the first time I heard the phrases Achtung Bitte, Bitte Schoen, Danke Schoen, and a slew of other intriguing expressions that have since become a part of my lexicon. The Germans seem to have a name for every event and mood. Even now, I constantly say Danke instead of Thank you, and my discourse is laced with German jargon. At home, my wife and I use terms like fantastische instead of fantastic since German sounds foreign to us.

My business with Feodor Burgmann, Germany, and Europe began at that point. I was amazed by the orderly traffic on the autobahn as I drove from the airport to the picturesque town of Wolfratshausen, which sits at the foot of the Alps. Men drove at breakneck speeds, and women did as well. It was all new to me, and it was too much for me to take in at once. I was thinking about what it would be like to drive on German roads. Is it possible that I’ll ever go on the autobahn?

Furthermore, I had not planned for the cold and the chance of snow, which are common in Germany’s southern areas. Even during the day, the temperature in November might drop below two degrees Celsius. I was wearing a traditional Indian shirt and became aware of its garish multicolours. I was eager to get rid of it as quickly as possible. The lowest temperature is 20 degrees Celsius in my location, so I was unprepared for the cold weather and worse, may be considered unfashionable. The following day, I went to the market in Munich and purchased a beige Mackintosh overcoat. I felt glad and at ease now that I resembled one of them.



“Mechanical seals are a dynamic, complex, and highly competitive industry”

The signing ceremony for the joint venture took place on November 10, 1993, as planned, and was featured in the Lokales newspaper. As I previously stated, my older brother Hussein Balwa was present to sign the deal and oversee its flawless implementation. My training, which began on November 8, 1993, lasted three weeks. It was exciting and energising. I thought it was a fantastic learning experience and was quite sad to come home at the conclusion. I had been having a great time. A special note should be made of the friendliness and camaraderie of the company’s employees. During the three weeks of training, I learned a lot about technical subjects. However, one thing stuck with me the most: success came to German engineers due to their devotion, honesty, tenacity, and, most importantly, discipline. Discipline set them out from the crowd.

Back in India, I became active in passing on all I had learned during my study in Germany. My Indian colleagues sometimes misunderstood certain portions of my directions. They frequently questioned why chores had to be completed in a certain way. They liked taking shortcuts. Then I’d grin

and add, “discipline, my good colleagues — discipline.”

I’ve had my fair share of disasters, failures, and disappointments. I was partially at fault since I had elevated the expectations of my consumers. We were happy to promote ourselves as a German firm capable of resolving any mechanical seal problem, and our clients obliged us by bringing all of their difficulties to us. The majority of them were chronic situations that the rivals were unable to resolve. We burnt our fingers in the process, and of course, a lot of money was wasted. As a result, our reputation suffered until we eventually got our act together.

After 17 years of investing in the mechanical seals business, I was finally beginning to relax and enjoy the fruits of my lengthy labour—a high that made me assume nothing could go wrong—when the firm in Germany announced that a more giant conglomerate had bought it over. It was the year 2004. I felt I shouldn’t be concerned about an event taking place in Germany because it was so far away from India, but how naive I was. The repercussions did appear on our doorstep, although three years later.

Despite our best efforts, my family was forced to sell our shares to the leading firm in Germany in August 2007 due to an amicable arrangement. Even though the agreement was reached in a gentlemanly manner, my family and I were not pleased. In reality, I was depressed. I had created a family within the corporation; it was the reason for my existence. My co-workers were like family to me, and the firm was like a child I had raised for many years.

Even yet, I had no choice but to let it go! It was too much for me to bear, and the loss had left me emotionally tired. Finally, I waved farewell to the company and my colleagues and retired into professional obscurity, far from the mechanical seal industry. I didn’t want to know anything about the firm or the mechanical seal industry. The matter could only serve to irritate my sensitive sensibilities. If I may be so bold, I will never be able to get over Burgmann’s death in India.

During those years, I took a break and did not want to begin anything new. My experience with launching a mechanical seal firm has stayed with me. Building a new business requires hard work and heartache, and I promised never to go into the mechanical seal industry again after my experience. I’d come to grips with it in my way. I kept myself busy with the family company of real estate and hospitality when an old colleague - Hanif Chaudhary – strolled in one evening in December 2011. Hanif, who was my first co-worker at A K Engineering and has always been a confidant and well-wisher, made an unexpected recommendation. Why don’t we build our own mechanical seal company? I asked, with a puzzled

face, “Do you know what it takes to establish a mechanical seal company?” “Yes,” he said. I asked him whether he was willing to go through the struggle and sorrow of beginning over.

In comparison to our current age, we were just 22 when we began out in 1989. We were both in our forties, and I was wondering aloud if our energy levels had dwindled. Even as I presented these rhetorical concerns, I knew Hanif Chaudhary, and I had no doubts about each other’s talents. In actuality, a new thought had begun to develop in our thoughts from that point on.

Sealmatic was born in January of 2012. Waves of memories came pouring back as it began on a bit of premise of 220 sq metres. Hussein Balwa, my brother, provided us with words of encouragement. In reality, my elder brothers, Hussein and Ismail, agreed to let us use the family’s infrastructure, which aided our ambitious plans. We were blessed with knowledge this time around. We had learned vital lessons from previous mistakes and hard-won victories in recent decades, which would, of course, stay with us and make us more mindful of our obligations.

Nonetheless, we were brimming with youthful exuberance. However, no amount of experience is sufficient since, to be honest, every encounter is fresh, and despite all of one’s wisdom, difficulties, and tribulations accompany a start-up. During my adventure with Sealmatic, situations were so tricky that I questioned my decision to restart. What caused me to resume the time-consuming procedure? It might be Hanif’s strength and support, who has always stood by my side like a rock

and given me the guts and desire to persevere in the face of adversity.

Hanif took over the entire production side of things with ease and efficiency, leaving me free to explore the world of international business. I’d also want to recognise and thank the whole Chaudhary family. Hanif, his brothers Abid, Sadique, and son Zakir have poured their blood, sweat, and tears into the development of Sealmatic, sometimes putting their life savings in danger.

In my case, I quickly recognised that I had more to lose in my second inning. In 1989, I had my entire career ahead of me, but this time I had a prosperous past in the mechanical seal’s company behind me, and both others and my expectations were great. In addition, I had to swallow my ego and pride and reintroduce myself to consumers as if I were a novice, which I was not.

I have decades of experience but no badge to put on my sleeve. I was right back where I had started. I was there,

luggage in hand, aspirations on my sleeves, the autobahn, autostrada, highway, or motorway—whatever name you call the route.

Furthermore, the joint aspirations of the Chaudharies and the Balwas (my own family) this time depended on my ability to raise publicity for our young enterprise. Even though I did not need to be concerned about the factory back home, thanks to Hanif and his family’s hard work and our dedicated employees, I needed to summon the courage to return my youth. Now and then, I’d get a harsh response from someone who hadn’t heard of us and didn’t care enough to give me a few minutes of their time.

Nonetheless, I had no alternative but to persevere. It was a pledge I’d made to our respective families and workers. The financial component of every business is only realised after a lengthy period. Finally, a good company is built by focusing on one objective at a time, just as a long journey becomes easier to begin by focusing on one

“A mechanical seal is an integral part of rotary machinery”

milestone. Over the previous few years, I've had to go on lengthy, exhausting trips to find consumers. I drove through cities large and small, through states and nations, and around the world to make Sealmatic a firm worthy of international acclaim. I've gone a long way from the youthful young man who arrived in Germany in 1989 and pondered if he'd ever drive on the autobahn. I've driven more than 200,000 kilometres on foreign roads today, yet I still feel like I've only scratched the surface. There is so much more to discover, earn, and enjoy.

Sealmatic has been synonymous with mechanical seals over the years, with deliveries to more than 43 countries. It is the only Indian mechanical seal firm with API Q1 and ATEX certification, as well as a lengthy list of delighted clients. I must acknowledge my brother Hussein Balwa's assistance and trust in us during this trip. In 2017, we relocated our production to a state-of-the-art building thanks to his assistance. The exact date was May 19, which made for an amusing coincidence; it was on the same date 28 years earlier that I entered the mechanical seal company. I felt as though my life had come full circle, and I was standing on the verge of a new one.

Sealmatic's contemporary operation has evolved dramatically from its inception in 220 square metres. Anything else I say here about a firm like Sealmatic, which is growing by the day, will be premature. Sealmatic is the culmination of all the people involved in it and a vision that Hanif and I shared. To future generations, I would want to emphasise that a seed planted by Hussein Balwa in my revered father's name through a rather

inconspicuous firm named A K Engineering demonstrates to us that a company's name, as well as the hands controlling it, can change over time, but its ideals stay constant. I was granted the honour of watering and nurturing this seed to its full potential, a process that is still ongoing, but I am confident that when its heirs taste the fruits, they will remember where it all began.

Every new use encourages ingenuity and necessitates solutions. Physics, chemistry, mathematics, and, most importantly, common sense are included in the topic. I gained a deep admiration for the mechanical seal industry. It is a business that is essential to all sectors. It follows my philosophy: the more important things will fall into place if you get the tiny things right.

Once, a knowledgeable and experienced member of the mechanical seal business warned me. He was aware of my family's long-standing involvement in hospitality and real

estate. He was perplexed as to why I would want to re-enter a challenging field like mechanical seals rather than rely on my earlier successes. Indeed, it was a well-intended worry from a person who only had good intentions for me. "Why are you getting back into the mechanical seal business?" he had inquired. What could I possibly say? I was 22 when I discovered my way to this sector after dabbling in various other fields. Boys had to earn their position in the family business at the moment they were 20. I experimented in hospitality and real estate before spinning ideas and making plans to start other enterprises, but once I stepped foot in the mechanical seal industry, I realised I had discovered my destiny. We often meet our fate when we least expect it. I returned to the battle of my own decision, realising that the staid and straightforward would not appeal to someone who had spent years in the mechanical seal industry. I couldn't think of any way to explain my decision. The reason I told him made both of us laugh.

*“Initially,
an entrepreneur seeks
genuine admiration
for the product.”*