

Veteran Industrialist and Business Leader Rıza Güral Shares Gürok's 78-Year Journey

Rıza Güral, Chair of the Board of Gürok Group, shared the 78-year journey of Gürok, which began in Kütahya in 1948 and today operates across various sectors. Güral shared his insights on his approach to industrialism, investments in technology, the importance of human capital, his strong ties to Kütahya, and the values passed down to future generations.

In an interview, Rıza Güral, Chair of the Board of Gürok Group, shared the story of Gürok's 78-year journey, which began with trading activities in Kütahya in 1948 and has since evolved into a global group operating across industries including manufacturing, tourism and glass. Güral reflected on the decision to transition into industrial production, his vision of developing proprietary production technologies, the importance he places on human capital, his commitment to Kütahya, and Gürok's evolution over the years.

Güral noted that he grew up within Kütahya's long-established culture of production and craftsmanship, and said that their decision to move from trading into industrial production was rooted in their belief that manufacturing creates lasting value. Describing the transition to the glass industry, which began with tile production, as a significant turning point in their industrial journey, Güral emphasized that the most critical decision shaping Gürok's future was the vision to develop its own technology.

"If you cannot develop your own technology, both your business and your future are in the hands of others"

Güral described the role of the decision to develop proprietary technologies in Gürok's growth:

"I said we should not only be a manufacturer, but also a company that develops its own technology. That decision shaped Gürok's future. We began developing our own machinery and molds. Today, we are one of only three companies in the world developing its own production technology in our industry. This has given us speed, independence and a significant competitive advantage."

Emphasizing that being an industrialist goes beyond simply manufacturing products, Güral noted that the concepts of local production and self-reliance should be considered together with technology, know-how and human capital. He said, "A true national industrialist is one who creates added value here, develops technology here, trains its people and reinvests what it earns back into these lands."

Güral stated that Gürok's transformation into a group that exports to more than 140 countries and ranks among the world's leading producers of tableware glass is built on decades of expertise. He described industrialism in terms of continuity, responsibility, patience and a strong belief in production.

“The greatest investment is in people”

Rıza Güral also highlighted the importance of human capital in Gürok’s development. He said they encouraged young engineers to take on responsibility and emphasized that making mistakes is a natural part of the learning process.

Güral underscored the long-term value of developing people, saying, “A product exists today and a new one may come tomorrow. But a well-trained person creates value for a lifetime, both for you and for the country.”

Güral noted that during the establishment of LAV, they chose to give responsibility to young and well-educated employees. He added that seeing the young people he worked with at the time now taking on roles at different levels across Gürok Group is one of his greatest sources of pride.

An entrepreneurial approach extending from industry to tourism

Güral also spoke about Gürok’s investments in tourism alongside its industrial operations. He noted that the Group’s tourism journey began 35 years ago in Antalya with Ali Bey Hotels & Resorts and has since reached an international scale with the JOALI brands in the Maldives.

Güral said that the common ground shared by different sectors such as industry and tourism is the commitment to doing one’s work to the highest possible standard. “The fundamental question in every sector is: ‘How can I offer the best?’” he said, describing Gürok’s investments across different fields through this shared approach.

“Kütahya is like a passion for me”

In the interview, Rıza Güral also spoke about his connection with Kütahya. He said that continuing to invest in the city where Gürok was founded is not simply a business decision for him, but also a responsibility, describing the “Kütahya first” approach as a matter of personal commitment.

Güral noted that Kütahya has significant potential thanks to its production culture, human capital and strategic location, and emphasized the importance of acting collectively in shaping the city’s future.

“Kütahya’s potential is far greater than where it stands today. The foundation of national development lies in local development. Kütahya has advantages through its production culture, human capital and strategic location. I look to the future with optimism. As long as we come together and work for the needs of our city.”

Values passed down to the next generation

Güral also spoke about Gürok now being managed by the third generation, emphasizing that the sustainability of family businesses depends not only on capital but also on shared values and a common business culture.

Güral said that he passed on the business culture he inherited from his father to his children, and that the new generation has carried this approach forward in their own ways, taking Gürok into new areas.

“I entrusted the business culture I inherited from my father to my children. They have continued that same approach in their own ways. And they have done it very well. They not only preserved what we had built, but also built upon it. They entered different fields, created new businesses and carried Gürok to where it is today. Seeing this is a great source of pride for me. Most importantly, while forging their own paths, they remained connected to their roots and values.”

In the interview, which explores Gürok's 78-year journey from its beginnings in Kütahya in 1948 to its operations across various sectors today, Rıza Güral highlighted the importance of a culture of production, investment in technology, developing people, a strong connection to Kütahya, and values passed down across generations in building a company's long-term journey.