

TITLE

SUBSTRATE CASSETTE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a substrate cassette used to store various types of substrates such as glass substrates used in liquid crystal displays. More particularly, the present invention relates to a substrate cassette that prevents contact between substrates stored on support bars at the time of use.

2. Description of the Related Art

In the production process of liquid crystal displays, substrate cassettes that house a plurality of horizontally oriented glass substrates in multiple levels in the vertical direction are used to temporarily store glass substrates. These substrate cassettes, when viewed from the front of the substrate cassette in the state of storing substrates, normally contain a plurality of support bars that support each substrate by being alternately positioned with a plurality of substrates in the vertical direction.

From the viewpoint of production efficiency of the liquid crystal displays, the functions required of a substrate cassette include being able to house and store a large number of glass substrates. Consequently, the support bars, which are the constituent members of the substrate cassette and directly support the glass substrates, are required to be as thin as possible in the vertical direction and allow vertically adjacent glass substrates to be stored in extremely close proximity.

In addition, from the viewpoint of guaranteeing the quality of the glass substrates, another function required of the substrate cassette is to prevent the stored glass

substrates from contacting each other. Namely, although a substrate cassette normally houses several tens of glass substrates, the vertically adjacent glass substrates must not be allowed to contact each other resulting in damage to the surfaces thereof. Consequently, the support bars that directly support the glass substrates are required to be resistant to bending.

Moreover, from the viewpoint of workability during liquid crystal display production, another function required of the substrate cassette is to be lightweight overall. In particular, since the glass substrates used in the production of liquid crystal displays have become increasingly large in recent years, the substrate cassettes used for the storage thereof are also becoming correspondingly larger. Therefore, the support bars serving as constituent members of these substrate cassettes are required to be as lightweight as possible.

In this manner, support bars are required to have the apparently offsetting characteristics of thinness and resistance to bending, while also being required to be as lightweight as possible.

Examples of support bars, storage cassettes containing support bars and related technology thereto have been disclosed as indicated below.

Japanese Patent Application Laid-open No. 2000-7148 discloses a glass substrate cassette that houses or stores; for example, glass substrates used in liquid crystal display devices. This reference defines a glass substrate cassette that houses glass substrates that is provided with edge supports composed so as to support the edges of housed glass substrates, and a central support section composed so as to support the central portions of the glass substrates.

Japanese Patent Application Laid-open No. 2000-142876 discloses a substrate-housing cassette used to house, for example, plastic substrates used in the production process of liquid crystal display elements using plastic substrates. This reference defines a substrate housing cassette comprising a front panel having an opening for removing and inserting substrates, and upper, lower, right side, left side and back panels provided with holes, and provided with substrate edge supports protruding from both side panels towards the inside for supporting the left and right edges of the substrates, and a substrate central support protruding from the back panel towards the inside for supporting the central portion of the substrates.

Japanese Patent Application Laid-open No. 2004-146578 discloses a cassette substrate support member and a substrate cassette that enables the weight of the substrate cassette to be reduced. This reference defines a cassette substrate support member used in substrate cassettes that house substrates in a layered state for supporting the substrates from below at predetermined intervals that is provided so as to protrude to the inside from the substrate cassette frame, and has ribs made of long rod-like members, holding members provided on one end of the ribs for fixing the ribs to the frame, and auxiliary support members provided on the ribs at predetermined intervals along the axial direction of the ribs; wherein, the ribs have a carbon fiber-reinforced plastic material that contains carbon fibers oriented in the axial direction thereof.

US Patent Application Publication No. 2006/0011507 discloses a substrate housing cassette used in the production process of various types of substrates such as glass substrates used in liquid crystal display devices, and more

particularly, a central support member (support bar) disposed at each level of the cassette. This reference defines a substrate cassette support bar for supporting each substrate so as to inhibit bending of the central portion thereof in a substrate cassette that houses a plurality of horizontally oriented substrates in multiple levels in the vertical direction; wherein, said support bar is formed with a carbon fiber composite material that contains highly elastic carbon fibers having a tensile elastic modulus of 490 to 950 GPa at 30% by volume or more.

In the past, when the angle of a support bar was found to have deviated from a desired angle after having attached a support bar, the support bar was reattached. However, since it is necessary to firmly attach the support bar to the frame of the substrate cassette, reattaching the support bar resulted in an extremely large burden in terms of time and labor. In the case of using a short support bar, even if there is a certain degree of distortion in the support bar angle, the distortion at the end of the support bar is not that great. However, the length of support bars in substrate cassettes that store large-sized glass substrates referred to as 8th generation substrates can be as much as about 2000 mm. Consequently, even the slightest amount of distortion when the support bars are installed can end up becoming quite large at the end of the support bars, potentially causing contact between glass substrates depending on the particular case.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Thus, an object of the present invention is to provide a substrate cassette capable of easily adjusting support bars to the proper angle in the case the angle of a support bar has deviated from a desired angle.

The present invention relates to a substrate cassette that houses a plurality of horizontally oriented substrates in multiple levels in the vertical direction and in which support bars are arranged that support the substrates so as to inhibit bending of the central portion of each substrate, wherein a vertical direction adjustment mechanism that adjusts distortion of the support bars in the vertical direction is provided between the support bars and a frame formed on the back of the opposite side from the substrate insertion side. In the substrate cassette of the present invention, the vertical direction adjustment mechanism preferably is a mechanism that adjusts the angle in the vertical direction of the support bars relative to the frame with a screw.

In addition, the present invention also includes a substrate cassette that houses a plurality of horizontally oriented substrates in multiple levels in the vertical direction and in which support bars are arranged that support the substrates so as to inhibit bending of the central portion of each substrate, wherein together with a vertical direction adjustment mechanism that adjusts distortion of the support bars in the vertical direction being provided between the support bars and a frame formed on the back of the opposite side from the substrate insertion side, a horizontal direction adjustment mechanism that adjusts distortion of the support bars in the horizontal direction is provided between the frame and the support bars. In this storage cassette of the present invention, the vertical direction adjustment mechanism preferably is a mechanism that adjusts the angle in the vertical direction of the support bars relative to the frame with a screw, and the horizontal direction adjustment mechanism preferably is a mechanism

that adjusts the angle in the horizontal direction of the support bars relative to the frame with a screw.

In this type of substrate cassette, the support bars are preferably made of a carbon fiber composite material, or a carbon fiber composite material and a material other than a carbon fiber composite material.

The substrate cassette of the present invention is provided with a vertical direction adjustment mechanism that adjusts distortion of support bars in the vertical direction between a frame and the support bars. Consequently, any distortion of the support bars can be easily adjusted after the support bars have been fixed to the frame.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic perspective view of an example of a glass substrate cassette of the present invention provided with support bars;

FIG. 2A is a perspective view, FIG. 2B an overhead view and FIG. 2C a side view of a support bar 22 as a constituent member of a substrate cassette 12 shown in FIG. 1; and,

FIG. 3A is an overhead view and FIG. 3B is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of an example of a structure for fixing a support member 18 and a support bar 20 shown in FIG. 1.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention relates to a substrate cassette that uses predetermined constituent members. The substrate cassette of the present invention is provided with a vertical direction adjustment mechanism that adjusts distortion of support bars in the vertical direction between a frame and the support bars. Consequently, the angle of the support bars can be adjusted after the support bars have been attached to the frame of the substrate cassette. In other words, the angle of the support bars can be adjusted to a desired

angle without having to carry out the bothersome work of reattaching the support bars.

The following provides a detailed explanation of the substrate cassette of the present invention with reference to the drawings.

Fig. 1 is a schematic perspective view of an example of a glass substrate cassette 12 of the present invention provided with support bars, and glass substrates or other substrates 14 are inserted and removed from the direction of arrow A shown in Fig. 1. Shelves 16, which serve as edge supports for supporting the edges of housed substrates, are provided in multiple levels on both sides of the substrate entrance, a row of support bars 20 are provided in the vertical direction that have fixed ends fixed with a support member 18 fulfilling the role of a frame on the opposing side from the substrate entrance, and substrates 14 are held horizontally while inhibiting bending of the central portions of substrates 14. In Fig. 1, although a constitution is shown in which a row of support bars 20 in the vertical direction are provided nearly in the center of the opposing side from the substrate entrance, the present invention is not limited thereto, but rather a plurality of rows may be used provided they are able to inhibit bending of the central portions of substrates 14.

Known materials can be used for the materials of those members other than the adjustment members to be described later, including the support bars 20 that compose substrate cassette 12. Moreover, there are no particular limitations on the materials of the edge support shelves 16 as well as other constituent members, such as a bottom frame, top frame and back frame serving as the opposing side from the substrate entrance, and can also be composed of, for example, a carbon

fiber composite material. In this case, both light weight and rigidity of substrate cassette 12 can be simultaneously realized at a high level.

In the example shown in Fig. 1, although the width of each shelf 16 is made to be wider than the width of support bars 20, a plurality of shelves 16 having a width roughly equal to that of support bars 20 can be arranged at predetermined intervals on both sides of the substrate entrance. In addition, a plurality of shelf units (three in Fig. 1), which are separated in the lengthwise direction of support bars 20, can also be arranged at predetermined intervals as shown in Fig. 1.

Next, a detailed explanation is provided of support bars 20. Fig. 2A is a perspective view, Fig. 2B is an overhead view and Fig. 2C is a side view of a support bar 22 as a constituent member of substrate cassette 12 shown in Fig. 1. In the example shown in Fig. 2, support bar 22 is composed of an upper plate 24 made of a carbon fiber composite material (carbon fiber-reinforced plastic, abbreviated simply as "CFRP"), a lower plate 26 made of CFRP, and a hollow intermediate member 28 arranged between upper plate 24 and lower plate 26 and made of a material other than CFRP, and having a hollow structure overall. Furthermore, although the example shown in Fig. 2 is an example of a hollow structure, support bar 22 is not limited to this form, but rather can also employ a solid structure. In addition, support bar 22 can also be comprised entirely of CFRP.

There are no particular limitations on the composition of the CFRP used for the material of upper plate 24 and lower plate 26.

There are no particular limitations on the composition of the CFRP used for the material of upper plate 14 and lower

plate 16. A wide range of known materials can be applied for the CFRP. Lightweight CFRP that is also resistant to bending is used preferably. An example of a CFRP that is used is that which contains 30% by volume or more of highly elastic carbon fibers having a tensile elastic modulus of 490 to 950 GPa. If the content is 30% by volume or more, members are obtained that have adequate rigidity and high vibration attenuation characteristics. The content of the highly elastic carbon fibers is preferably 40% by volume or more. In addition, although all of the reinforcing fibers used may be highly elastic carbon fibers, a portion of the members may also be made of other reinforcing fibers such as carbon fibers having a tensile elastic modulus of less than 490 GPa, glass fibers, aramid fibers, silicon carbide fibers or other known reinforcing fibers. For example, a combination can be used in which the content of highly elastic carbon fibers is not more than 90% by volume, while the remainder consists of other reinforcing fibers, and particularly carbon fibers having a tensile elastic modulus of less than 490 GPa.

In addition, in the example shown in Fig. 2, a material other than a carbon composite material can be used for intermediate member 28 arranged between upper plate 24 and lower plate 26. For example, intermediate member 28 is preferably formed from aluminum or stainless steel having high strength and corrosion resistance. In addition, in the case of realizing a high level of light weight, intermediate member 28 is preferably formed from honeycomb-shaped aramid fibers not shown in the drawings. Aramid fibers have about 5 times the strength of ordinary steel wire, and in addition to being lightweight, have superior heat resistance and impact resistance, thereby

making them particularly advantageous for use as intermediate member 28.

As shown in Fig. 2, in the case of adopting a hollow structure for the entirety of support bar 22, it is preferable that the fixed end of the support bar have a structure in which the outer circumference of the cross-section that is perpendicular to the lengthwise direction of the support bar becomes smaller moving towards the free end in order to obtain higher vibration attenuation characteristics. Here, the "lengthwise direction" refers to the direction of a line that connects the cross-sectional center of gravity (G1) of the fixed end and the cross-sectional center of gravity (G2) of the free end of the hollow support bar 22 shown in Fig. 2.

In support bar 22 shown in Fig. 2, in the case of defining the width and height of the fixed end as $H1$ and $T1$, respectively, and the width and height of the free end as $H2$ and $T2$, respectively, support bar 22 has a tapered shape in which only the width becomes narrower moving towards the free end ($H1 > H2$, $T1 = T2$). However, a support bar that can be used in the substrate cassette of the present invention is not limited to this shape. In addition to support bar 22 having the shape shown in Fig. 2, a support bar applicable to the substrate cassette of the present invention can also adopt a tapered shape in which, for example, only the thickness becomes smaller moving towards the free end ($H1 = H2$, $T1 > T2$). Moreover, although not shown in the drawings, a support bar applicable to the substrate cassette of the present invention can also have a tapered shape in which both the width and height become smaller moving towards the free end ($H1 > H2$, $T1 > T2$).

In this manner, as shown in Fig. 2, in the case the

outer circumference of support bar 22 becomes smaller moving towards the free end, in order to reduce the amplitude during initial vibration, the outer circumference of the free end of support bar 22 is preferably $1/3$ or more, and preferably $1/2$ or more, the outer circumference of the fixed end. On the other hand, in order to demonstrate effects with respect to vibration attenuation characteristics by reducing the outer circumference even a little as compared with a support bar having the same outer circumference for the fixed and free ends, the outer circumference of the free end is preferably $9/10$ or less, and more preferably $3/5$ or less, the outer circumference of the fixed end.

In addition, an aspect in which the outer circumference becomes smaller moving in the direction of the free end is not limited to an aspect in which the outer circumference decreases uniformly from the fixed end towards the free end as shown in Fig. 2. For example, an aspect may be employed in which the outer circumference does not change at a portion near the fixed end and then gradually becomes smaller beyond that portion moving towards the free end, or an aspect may be employed in which the outer circumference decreases up to an intermediate portion in the lengthwise direction, and then remains constant after that section moving towards the free end, and various aspects can be employed.

Furthermore, although not shown in the drawings, a support bar applicable to the substrate cassette of the present invention may be of a shape in which both the widths and heights of the fixed end and the free end are of the same dimensions (for example, $H1 = H2$, $T1 = T2$ in Fig. 2).

The free end of support bar 22 may remain open as shown in Fig. 2, or a cap made of rubber or other elastic member may be inserted into the end of the opening.

Moreover, the length of the support bar 22 shown in Fig. 2 may be such that the support bar 22 is able to support a substrate so that bending of the central portion is inhibited when the substrate is housed in the substrate cassette 12 shown in Fig. 1. Consequently, this length may be suitably determined according to the size of the substrate to be housed. In the present invention, the effects demonstrated by the present invention become increasingly prominent the greater the length of support bar 22. In particular, the present invention is extremely useful in the case in which the length of the support bar is 500 mm or more, preferably 1000 mm or more, and more preferably 2300 mm or more. There are no particular limitations on the width of support bar 22, and the minimum width is to be secured that allows the required strength and bending rigidity to be maintained for inhibiting bending of the central portion of the housed substrate corresponding to the manner in which the materials used are combined. In addition, the height can also be suitably set so that the minimum required strength and bending rigidity are able to be secured based on the relationship with width within the range of the pitch at which the substrates are housed.

In support bar 22, in the case, for example, upper plate 24, lower plate 26 and intermediate member 28 arranged between these plates are composed of different materials as shown in Fig. 2, the support bar can be manufactured easily as compared with a support bar composed only of carbon fiber composite materials. More specifically, a cylindrical support bar made of a carbon fiber composite material as described in Japanese Patent Application Laid-open No. 2005-340480 has the characteristics of being lightweight and resistant to bending. However, the process by which

this support bar is manufactured is complex and complicated. The manufacturing of this support bar is particularly difficult in the case of producing long support bars for use with 8th generation substrates and so forth. With respect to this point, the support bar of the present invention can be manufactured by simply layering plate-shaped carbon fiber composite materials and intermediate members, making the manufacturing process remarkably simple. Depending on the particular case, the upper plate, lower plate and intermediate member can be transported to a liquid crystal production factory and then assembled within the factory to enable the support bar to be manufactured even more easily.

In addition, the vibration attenuation characteristics of the support bar can be improved by composing upper plate 24, lower plate 26 and intermediate member 28 from different materials. Consequently, contact between glass substrates during bending of the support bar can be effectively prevented. In addition, since vibrations are dampened quickly, insertion and removal of substrates can be carried out smoothly thereby improving workability. Moreover, the weight of the support bar can be reduced by using CFRP for the material of the upper plate 24 and lower plate 26, thereby making it possible to realize a reduction in weight for the entire substrate cassette. Even lighter weight support bars can be provided in the case of employing a hollow shape for the intermediate member.

The following provides an explanation of a production method of a support bar applicable to the substrate cassette of the present invention by focusing particularly on an example of a method for producing a tapered, hollow support bar as shown in Fig. 2. The fact that support bars having

other shapes can also be produced by suitably altering the method explained below can be easily understood by a person with ordinary skill in the art.

First, as a preliminary step, carbon fiber composite materials are prepared for the upper and lower plates, and an aluminum sheet is prepared for the intermediate member.

(Formation of Upper and Lower Plates)

The carbon fiber composite material used for the upper and lower plates is formed in the manner described below. First, a matrix resin is impregnated into a carbon fiber sheet to form an uncured prepreg sheet. This prepreg sheet, for example, preferably uses highly elastic carbon fibers having a tensile elastic modulus of 490 to 950 GPa at 30% by volume or more. In addition, glass fibers or other fibers can also be added to the carbon fiber composite material provided they do not impair the support performance of the upper and lower plates.

Thermosetting resins such as epoxy resin, phenolic resin, cyanate resin, unsaturated polyester resin, polyimide resin, bismaleimide resin and so on can be used for the matrix resin. In this case, that which is able to withstand high temperature and high humidity environments such as rubber vulcanization is preferable. In addition, a thermosetting resin in which fine particles made of rubber or resin have been added to a thermosetting resin for the purpose of improving impact resistance and toughness, or a thermosetting resin in which a thermoplastic resin has been dissolved in a thermosetting resin may also be used for the thermosetting resin.

Although types of carbon fibers include PAN-based carbon fibers having a tensile elastic modulus of less than 490 GPa and pitch-based carbon fibers having a tensile elastic modulus of 490 to 950 GPa, these can be used in combination

in the present invention. In this case, the pitch-based fibers have the characteristic of a high elastic modulus, while the PAN-based fibers have the characteristic of high tensile strength. In addition, examples of prepreg sheets include unidirectional sheets in which the reinforcing fibers are oriented in the same direction, and cross-woven sheets such as flat weaves, twill weaves, satin weaves and triaxial weaves. Unidirectional sheets are particularly preferable for highly elastic carbon fiber prepreg sheets having a tensile elastic modulus of 490 to 950 GPa.

Various types of prepreg sheets can be prepared, such as those having different types of reinforcing fibers, those having different usage ratios of reinforcing fibers to the matrix resin, or those having different orientations of reinforcing fibers. Consequently, the prepreg sheet to be used is preferably suitably selected according to the glass substrates to be held so that support bars having the optimum bending rigidity are formed.

The outer surface of the prepreg sheet may be covering with a cross-woven prepreg sheet as necessary. A cross-woven prepreg sheet refers to an uncured sheet in which the above-mentioned matrix resin is impregnated into reinforcing fibers woven in a plurality of directions. Woven carbon fibers, glass fibers, aramid fibers or silicon carbide fibers and so on are preferably used for the reinforcing fibers. In addition, a flexible, highly adhesive sheet is preferable so as to be able to closely adhere to and coat the prepreg sheet. Coating can be carried out closely adhering to the prepreg sheet while applying heat with an iron and so on.

As a result of coating with this cross-woven prepreg sheet, fluffing, unraveling and so on occurring at processed

portions during post-processing such as cutting and boring following heat treatment can be prevented. Thus, the use of a cross-woven prepreg sheet offers the advantages of not only improving processability, but also reducing the generation of debris and so on without risk of damaging liquid crystal display substrates, plasma display substrates, silicon wafers or other precision substrates.

Next, the prepreg sheet is formed into a prepreg sheet section of predetermined dimensions. The shape of this prepreg sheet section is, for example, the shape of upper plate 24 and lower plate 26 shown in Fig. 2. The method used to form the prepreg sheet section can be cutting by mechanical processing or processing by a laser and so on.

The uncured prepreg sheet section obtained in this manner is placed in a vacuum bag and so on and then heated in an oven or similar apparatus while applying pressure to obtain the upper and lower plates. Heating conditions in this case consist of heating from room temperature at the rate of 2 to 10°C per minute, holding at a temperature of about 100 to 190°C for about 10 to 180 minutes, and then discontinuing heating and returning to room temperature by natural cooling. Here, the purpose of placing the uncured prepreg section in a vacuum bag is to apply external pressure (namely, atmospheric pressure) to the uncured members roughly uniformly.

(Formation of Intermediate Member)

The material used for the intermediate member is preferably a metal material having superior corrosion resistance such as aluminum or stainless steel. However, aluminum is used preferably in the case of realizing a high level of weight reduction for the support bar in particular. In addition, honeycomb-shaped aramid fibers are used more

preferably in place of aluminum when desiring to further reduce the weight of the support bar.

These metal materials or aramid fibers are formed into a metal member and so on of predetermined dimensions according to known forming methods to obtain the intermediate member. For example, the intermediate member may have the shape of intermediate member 18 shown in Fig. 1. Forming can be carried out by cutting by machining or by processing with a laser and so forth.

(Formation of Support Bar)

The support bar is formed according to known forming methods using the upper plate, lower plate and intermediate member obtained in the manner described above. The support bar can be formed by, for example, by adhering these members. A two-liquid mixed type of epoxy adhesive, for example, can be used for the adhesive. Although there are no particular limitations on the adhesion conditions, an adhesive that can be cured at room temperature is used preferably in consideration of workability.

A support bar obtained in this manner can be manufactured easily as previously explained. In addition, since the support bar is in the form of a composite member with the upper plate, lower plate and other members, the entire support bar is highly effective in inhibiting bending. Consequently, contact between glass substrates during bending of the support bar can be effectively prevented. Moreover, an even lighter weight support bar can be provided by suitably selecting the above-mentioned materials and adopting a hollow structure for the upper and lower plates.

Although the preceding paragraphs have provided explanations of each of the constituent members of the substrate cassette of the present invention, the following

provides an explanation of a structure serving as one of these constituent members for fixing support member 18 and support bar 20 shown in Fig. 1. Furthermore, known methods can be adopted to assemble those members other than the support bars.

Fig. 3A is an overhead view and Fig. 3B is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of an example using an adjustment mechanism 100 in a fixing structure between a support member 18 of a substrate cassette frame and a support bar 20. In Figs. 3A and 3B, a support bar 20 is fixed to a support member 18 through an adjustment mechanism 100. Adjustment mechanism 100 is constituted by a vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 for adjusting support bar 20 relative to support member 18 in the vertical direction, and a horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 coupled with the vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110, for adjusting support bar 20 relative to support member 18 in the horizontal direction.

As shown in Figs. 3A and 3B, the vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 is fixed by two bolts 131 and 132 and corresponding lock nuts 133 and 134 to support member 18 in the state of being surrounded by support member 18 in three directions (Fig. 3A). Vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 has a structure that allows rotation about the bolt hole of bolt 131 by directional displacement in Fig. 3B mediated by corresponding lock nuts 137 and 138 of bolts 135 and 136. Horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 is fixed to vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 by bolts 139 and 140, and has a structure that allows rotation about the bolt hole of bolt 139. Support bar 20 is joined to horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 by a known method such as adhesion in the state in which

the projecting portion of horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 is inserted therein.

Here, vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 can be made of any material provided it can be firmly coupled with support member 18 and bolted to horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120. For example, the use of aluminum is preferable in terms of light weight and processing ease. In addition, horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 can also be made of any material provided it can support a support bar 20 and be bolted to vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110. Similar to the vertical direction adjustment mechanism, the use of aluminum is preferable in terms of light weight and processing ease.

In addition, formation of adjustment mechanism 100 can be carried out by separately forming each adjustment mechanism 110 and 120, in which bolt holes of predetermined diameters have been formed at predetermined locations, and then bolting these adjustment mechanisms 110 and 120 with bolts 139 and 140 corresponding to the mode of use of angle adjustment in the horizontal direction.

Next, an explanation is provided of a mode of use of this adjustment mechanism 100.

First, support bar 20 and horizontal direction mechanism 120 are firmly joined with the projecting portion of horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 inserted into a hollow support bar 20.

Next, horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 is rotated by predetermined angle relative to vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 when coupling horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 and vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110, which as a result, determines the angle in the horizontal direction of support bar 20 relative

to support member 18. Here, although the dimensions of the bolt hole of bolt 139 perfectly match the dimensions of bolt 139, the dimensions of the bolt hole of bolt 140 is slightly larger than the dimensions of bolt 140, thereby enabling support bar 20 to move in the horizontal direction. The bolt hole of bolt 140 can have, for example, a roughly elliptical shape having its major axis in the horizontal direction as shown in Fig. 3A (vertical direction in Fig. 3A). The shape of the bolt hole of bolt 140 may also be in the form of an arc-shaped slot. As a result of employing such a structure, in the case of rotating horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 relative to vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 in the horizontal plane, horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 is rotated about the location of the bolt hole of bolt 139 in the state in which bolts 139 and 140 have been loosened. Next, the rotational position of horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 relative to vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110, namely the angle in the horizontal direction of support bar 20 relative to support member 38, can be determined by tightening bolts 139 and 140.

Moreover, vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 is rotated by predetermined angle in the vertical plane relative to support member 18 when coupling vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 and support member 38, which as a result, determines the angle in the vertical direction of support bar 20 relative to support member 18. Here, although the dimensions of the bolt hole of bolt 131 perfectly matches the dimensions of bolt 131, the dimensions of the bolt hole of bolt 132 are slightly larger than the dimensions of bolt 132, thereby enabling support bar 20 to move in the vertical direction. The bolt hole of bolt 132

can have, for example, a roughly elliptical shape having its major axis in the vertical direction as shown in Fig. 3B. The shape of the bolt hole of bolt 132 may also be in the form of an arc-shaped slot. As a result of employing this structure, in the case of rotating vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 in the vertical plane relative to support member 18, vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 is either pushed to the right or returned to the left in Fig. 3B and vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 is rotated about the location of the bolt hole of bolt 131 by displacing bolts 135 and 136 in the horizontal direction in Fig. 3B in the state in which bolts 131 and 132 have been loosened. Next, the rotational position of vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 relative to support member 18, namely the angle in the vertical direction of support bar 20 relative to support member 18, is determined by tightening bolts 131 and 132.

Vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 and horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120 can be finely adjusted after having produced the substrate cassette. For example, in the case the direction of a single support bar has shifted during the course of use of the substrate cassette, the direction of the support bar can be adjusted to a suitable direction simply by adjusting the adjustment mechanism.

Another example of a usage form of the adjustment mechanism is that which adjusts the angle corresponding to the weight of the glass substrates. In other words, bolt 132 is positioned towards the right side of the bolt hole thereof and tightened for support bars for which the weight of the glass substrates held is comparatively light, while conversely, bolt 132 is positioned towards the left side of the bolt hole and tightened in case the glass substrates

are comparatively heavy to prevent contact between vertically adjacent glass substrates.

In addition, as a result of employing adjustment mechanism 100 having the structure and function described above, by tightening bolt 140 at the same position in the bolt hole thereof for, for example, all support bars 20 fixed to the substrate cassette, the direction in which support bars 20 extend within the substrate cassette can be made to be uniform, thereby giving the substrate cassette an overall superior appearance. In addition, since the ends of the support bars are aligned, it becomes easy to insert and remove substrates thereby making it possible to improve workability.

Furthermore, although the example shown in Fig. 3 has adjustment mechanism 100 constituted by vertical direction adjustment mechanism 110 and horizontal direction adjustment mechanism 120, one of these can be omitted so that adjustment mechanism 100 adjusts the angle of support bar 20 in a desired direction only. Furthermore, in any case, the leftmost portion of adjustment mechanism 100 in Figs. 3A and 3B is required to have a mechanism for coupling support member 18, while the rightmost portion of adjustment mechanism 100 is required to have a mechanism for coupling support bars 20. The effects demonstrated by adjustment mechanism 100 are diminished unless support member 18 and adjustment mechanism 100, and adjustment mechanism 100 and support bars 20, are firmly coupled so that they do not shift out of position.

The substrate cassette of the present invention enables the angle of the support bars to be adjusted easily using an adjustment mechanism after the support bars have been attached to the substrate cassette. Consequently, the

amount of time and labor required to adjust the support bars can be reduced, thereby contributing to improved productivity of work involving the use of glass substrates such as the manufacturing of liquid crystal panels. The substrate cassette of the present invention is particularly useful for storing large-sized glass substrates referred to as 8th generation substrates. However, the present invention is not limited to 8th generation substrates, but naturally can also be applied to other sizes of glass substrates as well.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A substrate cassette that houses a plurality of horizontally oriented substrates in multiple levels in the vertical direction and in which support bars are arranged that support the substrates so as to inhibit bending of the central portion of each substrate, wherein a vertical direction adjustment mechanism that adjusts distortion of the support bars in the vertical direction is provided between the support bars and a frame formed on the back of the opposite side from the substrate insertion side.
2. The substrate cassette according to claim 1, wherein a horizontal direction adjustment mechanism that adjusts distortion of the support bars in the horizontal direction is provided between the frame and the support bars.
3. The substrate cassette according to claim 1, wherein the vertical direction adjustment mechanism adjusts the angle in the vertical direction of the support bars relative to the frame with a screw.
4. The substrate cassette according to claim 2, wherein the horizontal direction adjustment mechanism adjusts the angle in the horizontal direction of the support bars relative to the frame with a screw.
5. The substrate cassette according to any of claims 1, wherein the support bars are made of a carbon fiber composite material.
6. The substrate cassette according to any of claims 1, wherein the support bars are made of carbon fiber composite material and a material other than a carbon fiber composite material.