



US 20150207018A1

(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
YANG(10) **Pub. No.: US 2015/0207018 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Jul. 23, 2015**(54) **APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR
MANUFACTURING OF THIN FILM TYPE
SOLAR CELL****Publication Classification**

(51) **Int. Cl.**
H01L 31/18 (2006.01)
H01L 31/0468 (2006.01)
H01L 31/0224 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.**
CPC *H01L 31/18* (2013.01); *H01L 31/022425*
(2013.01); *H01L 31/0468* (2014.12)

(71) Applicant: **Cheol Hoon YANG**, Seongnam-si (KR)(72) Inventor: **Cheol Hoon YANG**, Seongnam-si (KR)(73) Assignee: **JUSUNG ENGINEERING CO., LTD.**,
Gwangju-si (KR)(21) Appl. No.: **14/674,698**(22) Filed: **Mar. 31, 2015****Related U.S. Application Data**(62) Division of application No. 13/227,978, filed on Sep.
8, 2011, now Pat. No. 9,018,034.(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Sep. 13, 2010 (KR) 10-2010-0089473

(57) **ABSTRACT**

Disclosed is an apparatus and method for manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, which enables the enhancement of productivity, the apparatus for manufacturing a thin film type solar cell including a first electrode forming unit; a first separation part; an optoelectric conversion layer forming unit; a contact line forming unit; a printing unit; and an etching process unit, wherein the etching process unit removes the optoelectric conversion layer in a second separation part to expose the first electrode in the second separation part through a wet etching process.

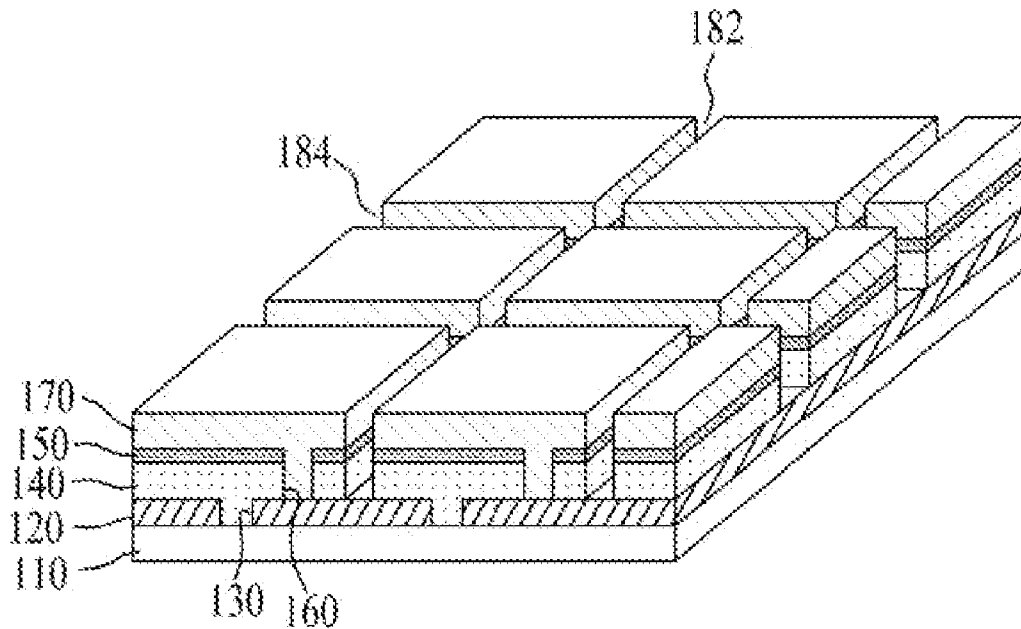


FIG. 1A

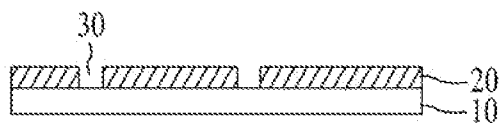


FIG. 1B

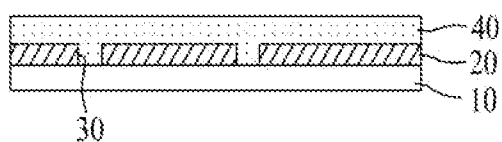


FIG. 1C

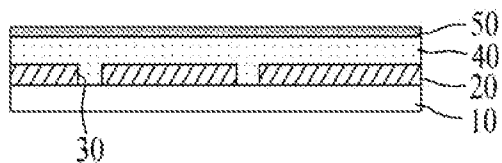


FIG. 1D

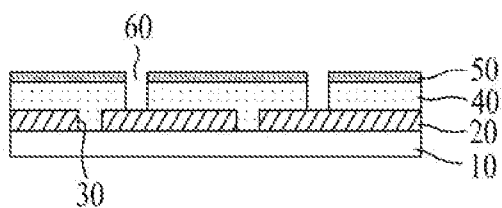


FIG. 1E

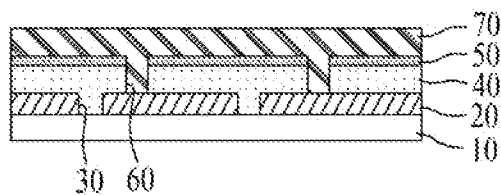


FIG. 1F

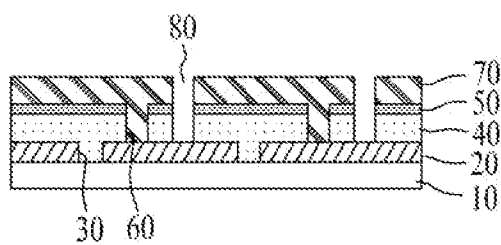


FIG. 2A

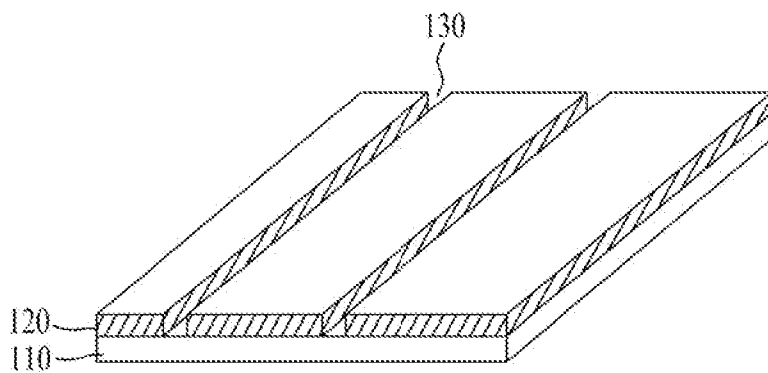


FIG. 2B

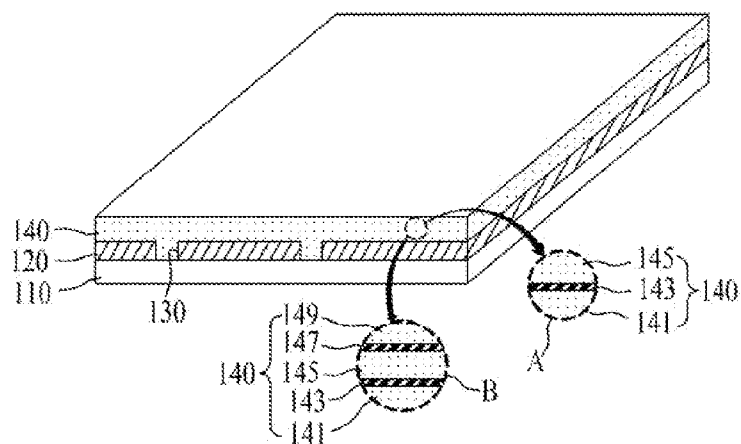


FIG. 2C

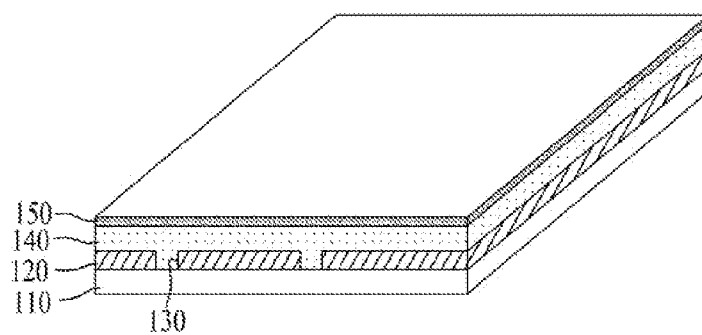


FIG. 2D

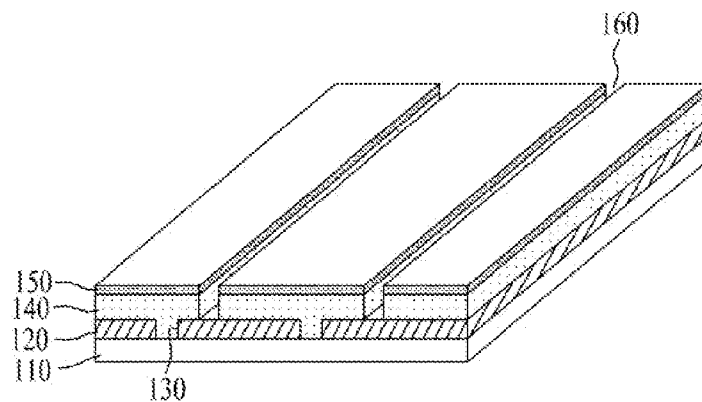


FIG. 2E

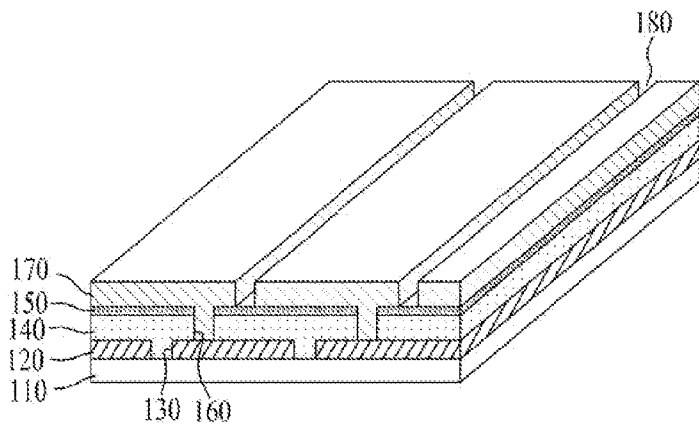


FIG. 2F

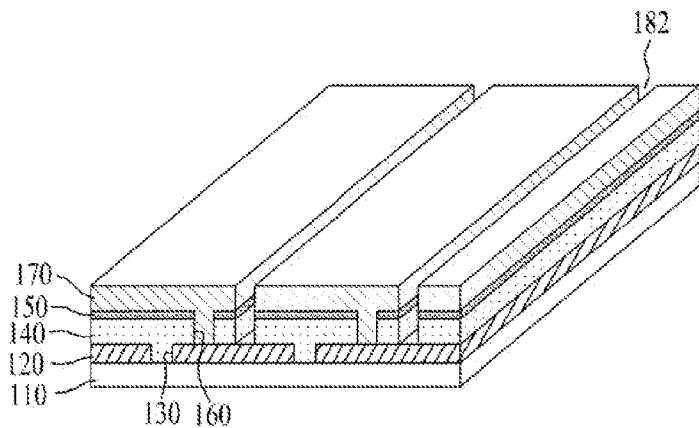


FIG. 3A

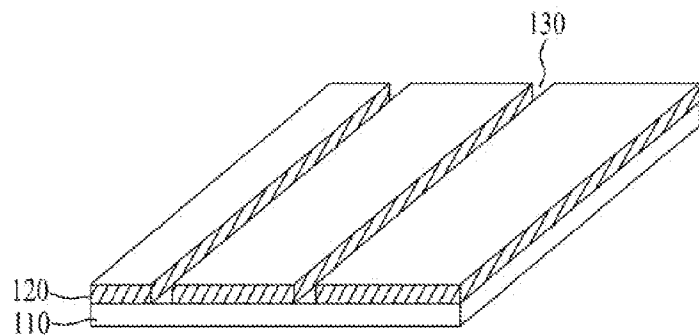


FIG. 3B

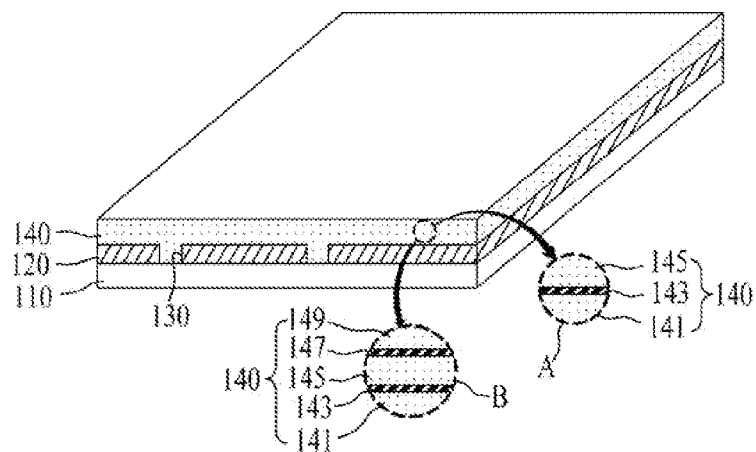


FIG. 3C

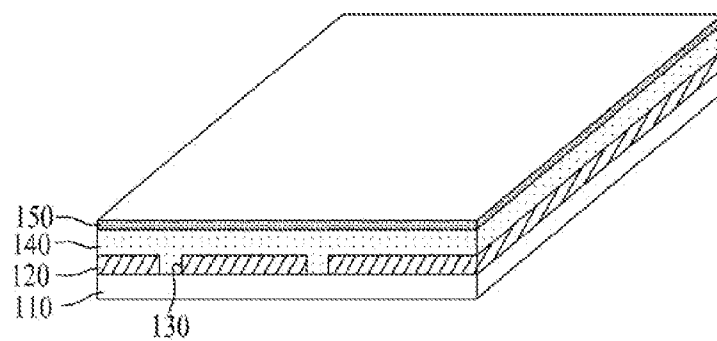


FIG. 3D

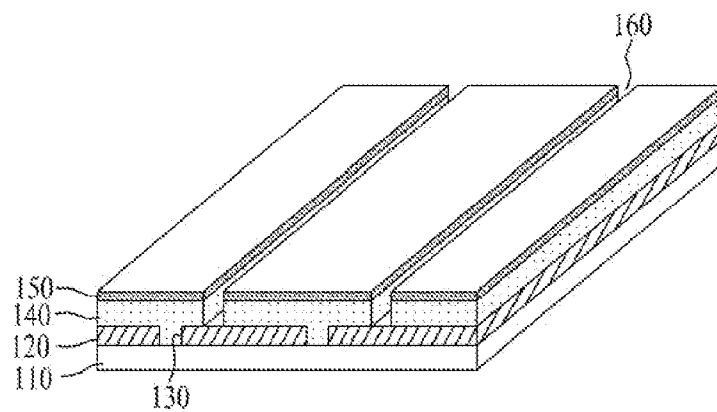


FIG. 3E

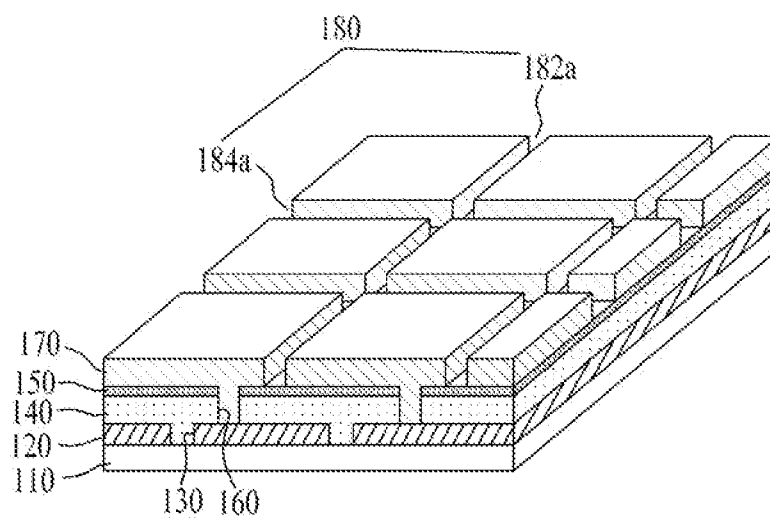


FIG. 3F

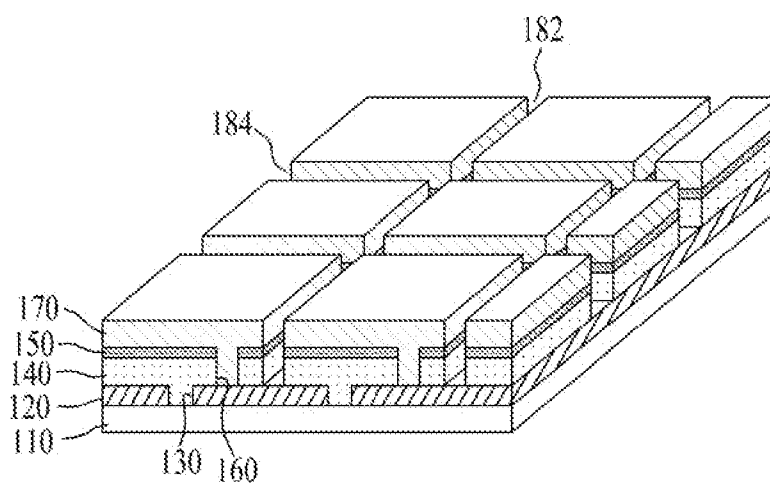


FIG. 4A

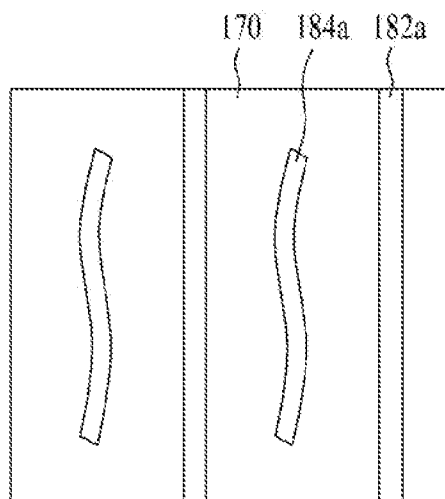


FIG. 4B

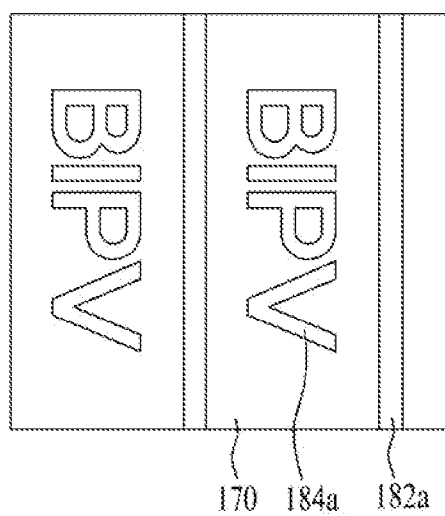


FIG. 5

<u>200</u>	<u>210</u>	<u>220</u>	<u>230</u>	<u>235</u>	<u>240</u>	<u>250</u>	<u>260</u>	<u>270</u>	<u>280</u>
------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------	------------

FIG. 6

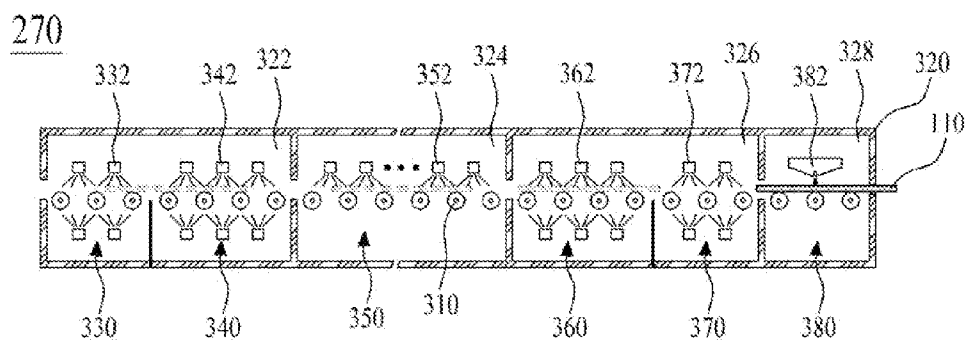


FIG. 7

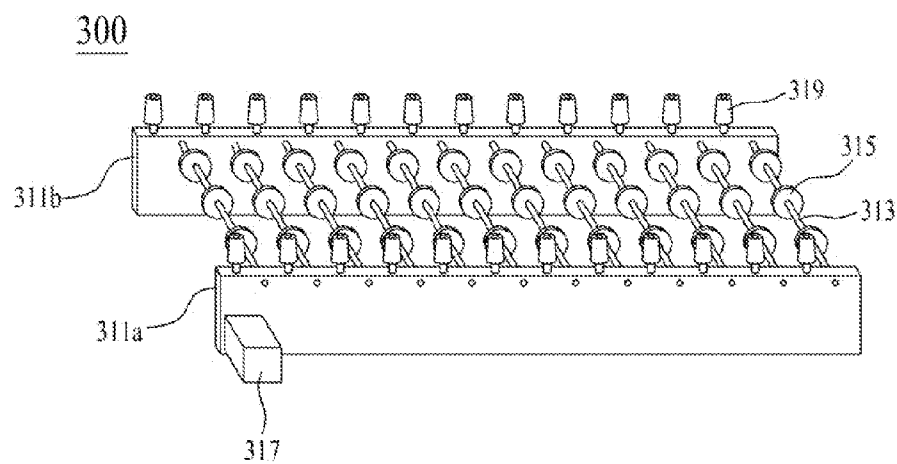


FIG. 8A

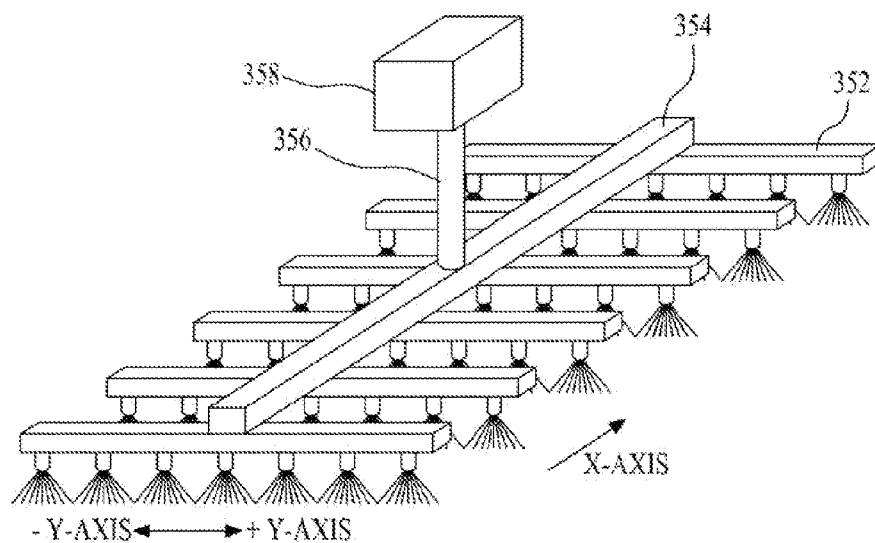


FIG. 8B

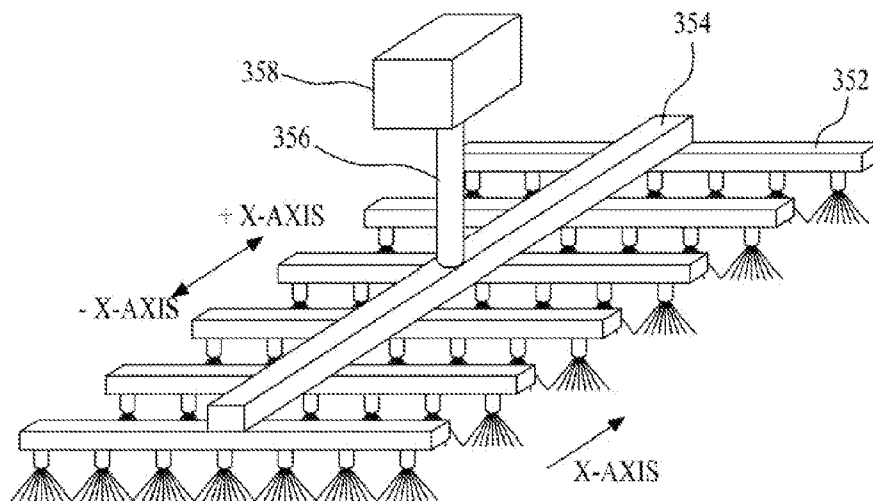


FIG. 8C

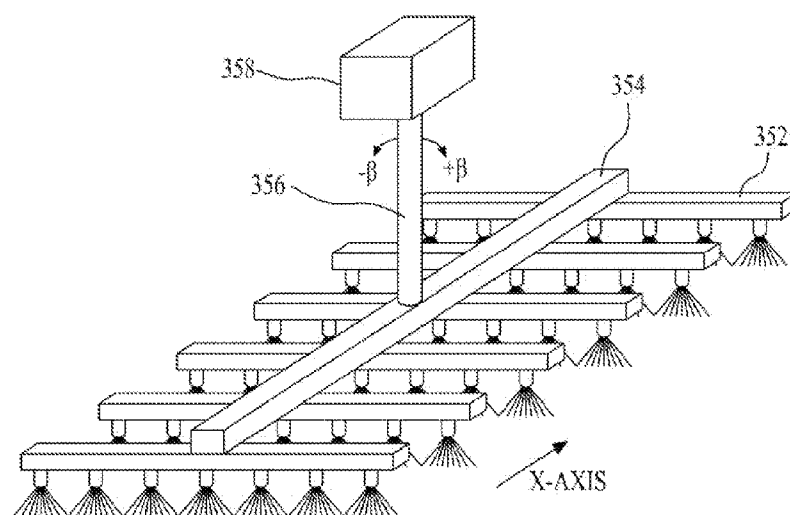
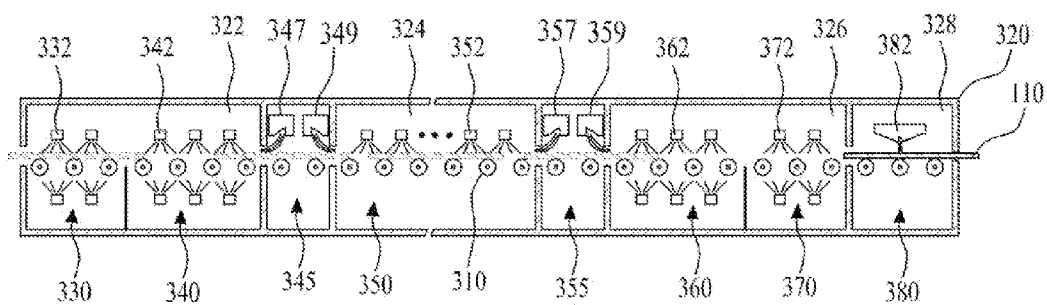
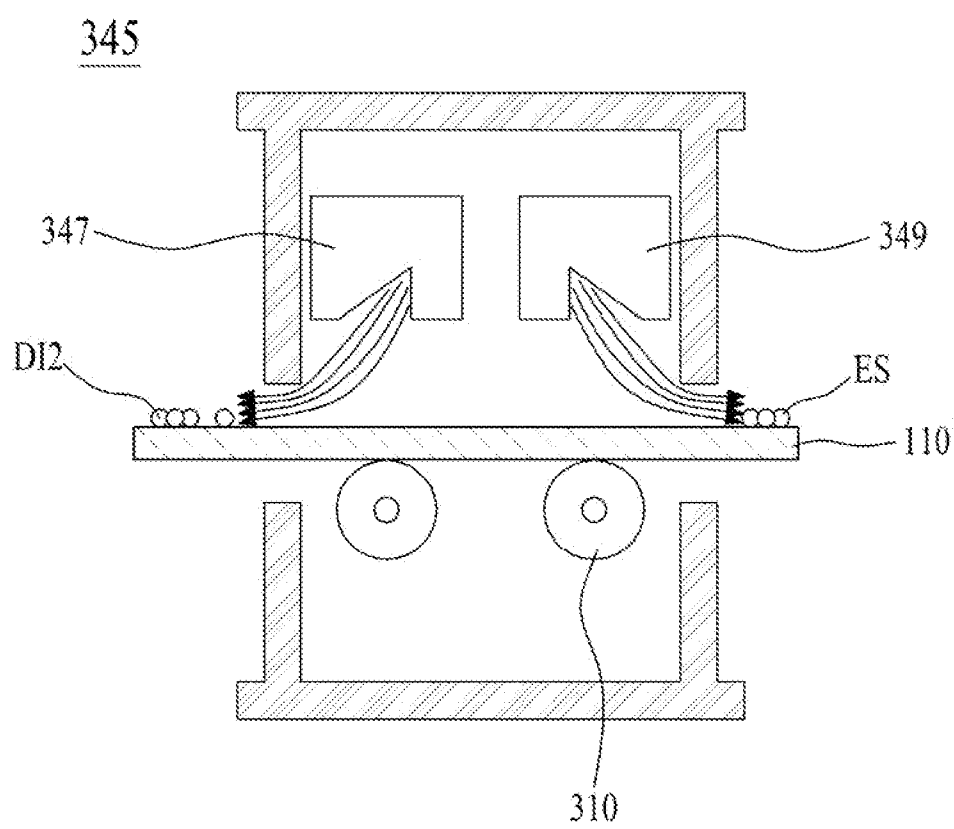


FIG. 9

270





APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR MANUFACTURING OF THIN FILM TYPE SOLAR CELL

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a divisional of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/227,978 (Attorney Docket No. OP11-JS-009-US-00), filed Sep. 8, 2011, pending, incorporated herein by reference in its entirety, which in turn claims the benefit of the Korean Patent Application No. 10-2010-0089473 filed on Sep. 13, 2010, which is incorporated herein by reference as if fully set forth herein.

BACKGROUND

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to a thin film type solar cell, and more particularly, to an apparatus and method for manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, which enables the enhancement of productivity.

[0004] 2. Discussion of the Related Art

[0005] Solar cells are apparatuses that convert light energy into electric energy by using semiconductor properties.

[0006] To provide a brief description on the structure and principle of solar cells, solar cells have a P-N junction structure where a positive (P) type semiconductor is joined to a negative (N) type semiconductor. When solar light is incident on a solar cell having the structure, holes and electrons are generated in a semiconductor by energy of the solar light. At this point, by an electric field that is generated through P-N junction, the holes “+” move to a P type semiconductor, and the electrons “-” move to an N type semiconductor, thereby generating a potential and thus producing a power. With this principle, solar cells produce a power.

[0007] Such solar cells are categorized into substrate type solar cells and thin film type solar cells.

[0008] Substrate type solar cells are manufactured using a semiconductor material such as silicon as a substrate, and thin film type solar cells are manufactured by forming a thin film type semiconductor on a substrate such as a glass.

[0009] Substrate type solar cells have better efficiency than thin film type solar cells, but have the limitation of a process in minimizing thickness. Also, since substrate type solar cells use a high-cost semiconductor substrate, the manufacturing cost increases, and moreover, it is difficult to use the substrate type solar cell in place of a window of a building because it is not easy to secure a light-transmitting region.

[0010] Thin film type solar cells have efficiency lower than substrate type solar cells. However, since thin film type solar cells are manufactured to have a thin thickness with a low-cost material, the manufacturing cost decreases, and thus, thin film type solar cells are suitable for mass production. Moreover, thin film type solar cells can be used in place of a window of a building because it is relatively easy to secure a light-transmitting region.

[0011] FIGS. 1A to 1F are sectional views sequentially illustrating a method of manufacturing a typical thin film type solar cell.

[0012] A method of manufacturing a typical thin film type solar cell will be described below with reference to FIGS. 1A to 1F.

[0013] As illustrated in FIG. 1A, a first electrode 20 is formed over a substrate 10, and then an electrode separation

part 30 is formed by removing the first electrode 20 at certain intervals in order for a certain region of the substrate 10 to be exposed, through a laser scribing process.

[0014] As illustrated in FIG. 1B, an optoelectric conversion layer 40 is formed over the substrate 10 on which the first electrode 20 is formed.

[0015] As illustrated in FIG. 1C, a transparent conductive layer 50 is formed on the optoelectric conversion layer 40.

[0016] As illustrated in FIG. 1D, a contact line 60 is formed by simultaneously removing the optoelectric conversion layer 40 and the transparent conductive layer 50 in order for a certain region of the first electrode 20 to be exposed, through the laser scribing process.

[0017] As illustrated in FIG. 1E, a second electrode 70 is formed on the contact line 60 and the transparent conductive layer 50. In this point, the second electrode 70 is electrically connected to the first electrode 20 through the contact line 60.

[0018] As illustrated in FIG. 1F, a cell separation part 80 is formed by simultaneously removing the second electrode 70, the optoelectric conversion layer 40, and the transparent conductive layer 50 in order for a certain region of the first electrode 20 adjacent to the contact line 60 to be exposed, through the laser scribing process.

[0019] The above-described method of manufacturing the typical thin film type solar cell has the following limitations.

[0020] First, the typical method forms the cell separation part 80 by simultaneously removing the second electrode 70, the optoelectric conversion layer 40, and the transparent conductive layer 50, through the laser scribing process using a laser irradiating device. Therefore, as the substrate 10 is enlarged, long time is taken in the laser scribing process. Furthermore, when using a plurality of laser irradiating devices for shortening time taken in the laser scribing process, the cost increases.

[0021] Second, since a window of a building is required to guarantee a prospect right, a light-transmitting region is required to be secured by a certain degree for using the thin film type solar cell in place of the window of the building. However, since the light-transmitting region is limited by the cell separation part 80 that is a region between the second electrodes 70 and thus a prospect right is not guaranteed, the laser scribing process is performed several times when enlarging the width of the cell separation part 30 for guaranteeing the prospect right, causing the reduction in productivity.

SUMMARY

[0022] Accordingly, the present invention is directed to an apparatus and method for manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, which enables the enhancement of productivity.

[0023] An aspect of the present invention is to provide an apparatus and method for manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, which enables the increase in the productivity of the thin film type solar cell that can secure a prospect right sufficient to apply the solar cell in place of a window.

[0024] Additional advantages and features of the invention will be set forth in part in the description which follows and in part will become apparent to those having ordinary skill in the art upon examination of the following or may be learned from practice of the invention. The objectives and other advantages of the invention may be realized and attained by the structure particularly pointed out in the written description and claims hereof as well as the appended drawings.

[0025] To achieve these and other advantages and in accordance with the purpose of the invention, as embodied and broadly described herein, there is provided an apparatus for manufacturing a thin film type solar cell including: a first electrode forming unit configured to form a first electrode on a substrate and a first separation part separating the first electrode; an optoelectric conversion layer forming unit configured to form an optoelectric conversion layer over the substrate, the substrate further including the first electrode and the first separation part; a contact line forming unit configured to remove a certain region of the optoelectric conversion layer on the first electrode to form a contact line; a printing unit configured to print a second electrode on the optoelectric conversion layer, the second electrode being connected to the first electrode through the contact line and separated at certain intervals by a second separation part; and an etching process unit configured to remove the optoelectric conversion layer in the second separation part and expose the first electrode using an etching process (e.g., by wet etching).

[0026] In another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a method of manufacturing a thin film type solar cell including: forming a first electrode over a substrate; removing a certain region of the first electrode to form a first separation part; forming an optoelectric conversion layer over the substrate, the substrate further including the first electrode and the first separation part; removing a certain region of the optoelectric conversion layer on the first electrode to form a contact line; printing a second electrode on the optoelectric conversion layer, the second electrode being connected to the first electrode through the contact line and separated at certain intervals by a second separation part; and etching the optoelectric conversion layer in the second separation part to expose the first electrode (e.g., using a wet etching process).

[0027] It is to be understood that both the foregoing general description and the following detailed description of the present invention are exemplary and explanatory and are intended to provide further explanation of the invention as claimed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0028] The accompanying drawings, which are included to provide a further understanding of the invention and are incorporated in and constitute a part of this application, illustrate embodiment(s) of the invention and together with the description serve to explain the principle of the invention. In the drawings:

[0029] FIGS. 1A to 1F are sectional views sequentially illustrating a method of manufacturing a typical thin film type solar cell;

[0030] FIGS. 2A to 2F are sectional views sequentially illustrating a method of manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

[0031] FIGS. 3A to 3F are sectional views sequentially illustrating a method of manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

[0032] FIGS. 4A and 4B are views for describing various embodiments of a light transmission pattern illustrated in FIG. 3E;

[0033] FIG. 5 is a block diagram schematically illustrating an apparatus for manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, according to an embodiment of the present invention;

[0034] FIG. 6 is a view schematically illustrating an etching process of FIG. 5;

[0035] FIG. 7 is a view schematically illustrating a conveyor of FIG. 6;

[0036] FIGS. 8A to 8C are views for schematically describing embodiments of a wet etching process of FIG. 7;

[0037] FIG. 9 is a view for schematically describing another embodiment of an etching process of FIG. 5; and

[0038] FIG. 10 is a view for schematically describing a first neutral zone of FIG. 9.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0039] Reference will now be made in detail to the exemplary embodiments of the present invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings. Wherever possible, the same reference numbers will be used throughout the drawings to refer to the same or like parts.

[0040] Hereinafter, embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings.

[0041] FIGS. 2A to 2F are sectional views sequentially illustrating a method of manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, according to a first embodiment of the present invention.

[0042] The method of manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, according to the first embodiment of the present invention, will be sequentially described below with reference to FIGS. 2A to 2F.

[0043] As illustrated in FIG. 2A, a first electrode **120** is formed over a substrate **110**, and then a first separation part **130** is formed by removing the first electrode **120** at certain intervals in order for a certain region of the substrate **110** to be exposed, through a laser scribing process.

[0044] The substrate **110** may be a glass substrate, a metal substrate, a plastic substrate, or a flexible substrate. When a glass substrate is used as the substrate **110**, the manufacturing cost of a solar cell can be reduced. On the other hand, when a metal substrate, a plastic substrate, or a flexible substrate is used as the substrate **110**, a solar cell can be thinned and lightened, and a flexible solar cell can be manufactured. For example, the metal substrate may be formed of aluminum or a stainless material, and the flexible substrate may be formed of a thin glass (having a thickness of about 50 μm to about 200 μm), a metal foil, or a plastic material. The plastic material may be thermoplastic semicrystalline polymer (TSP) such as polycarbonate (PC), polyethylene terephthalate (PET), polyethersulfone (PES), polyimide (PI), polyethylene naphthalate (PEN), and polyetheretherketone (PEEK).

[0045] The first electrode **120** may be formed of a transparent conductive material such as SnO_2 , $\text{SnO}_2\text{:F}$, $\text{SnO}_2\text{:B}$, $\text{SnO}_2\text{:Al}$, or indium tin oxide (ITO), over the substrate **110**. The first electrode **120** may be formed by a Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD) process.

[0046] The first electrode **120** is a surface on which solar light is incident, and thus, in order for the solar light to be maximally absorbed to inside a solar cell, the first electrode **120** may be formed to have a concave-convex structure through a texturing process. The texturing process is a process that processes a material surface in a shape such as a fabric surface in order for the material surface to have a rough concave-convex structure, and may be performed through an etching process using photolithography, an anisotropic etching process using chemical solution, or a groove forming process using mechanical scribing.

[0047] As illustrated in FIG. 2B, an optoelectric conversion layer **140** is formed over the substrate **110** on which the first separation part **130** and the first electrode **120** are formed.

[0048] The optoelectric conversion layer 140 according to the first embodiment of the present invention may be formed of a silicon-based semiconductor material, and have a PIN structure where a P type semiconductor layer, an I type semiconductor layer, and an N type semiconductor layer are sequentially stacked. Herein, an N or P type semiconductor layer thinner than the N or P type semiconductor layer may be formed instead of the I type semiconductor layer, and an N or P type semiconductor layer with a doping concentration lower than that of the N or P type semiconductor layer may be formed instead of the I type semiconductor layer.

[0049] In this way, when the optoelectric conversion layer 140 is formed in the PIN structure, the I type semiconductor layer is depleted by the P type semiconductor layer and the N type semiconductor layer, and thus, an electric field is generated internally. Furthermore, a hole and electron generated by solar light are drifted by the electric field and respectively recovered in the P type semiconductor layer and the N type semiconductor layer.

[0050] When the optoelectric conversion layer 140 is formed in the PIN structure, the P type semiconductor layer may be formed on the first electrode 120, and then the I type semiconductor layer and the N type semiconductor layer may be formed. The reason is for forming the P type semiconductor layer closely to a light receiving surface so as to maximize recovery efficiency by incident light because the drift mobility of a hole is lower than that of an electron.

[0051] An optoelectric conversion layer 140 according to a second embodiment of the present invention, as illustrated in an enlarged portion A in FIG. 2B, may be formed in a tandem structure where a first optoelectric conversion layer 141, a buffer layer 143, and a second optoelectric conversion layer 145 are sequentially stacked.

[0052] Each of the first and second optoelectric conversion layers 141 and 145 may be formed in a PIN structure where a P type semiconductor layer, an I type semiconductor layer, and an N type semiconductor layer are sequentially stacked.

[0053] The buffer layer 143 allows a hole and an electron to smoothly move through tunnel junction between the first and second optoelectric conversion layers 141 and 145, and may be formed of a transparent conductive material that is easily removed by a wet etching process.

[0054] An optoelectric conversion layer 140 according to a third embodiment of the present invention, as illustrated in an enlarged portion B in FIG. 2B, may be formed in a triple structure where a first optoelectric conversion layer 141, a first buffer layer 143, a second optoelectric conversion layer 145, a second buffer layer 147, and a second optoelectric conversion layer 149 are sequentially stacked.

[0055] Each of the first to third optoelectric conversion layers 141, 145 and 149 may be formed in a PIN structure where a P type semiconductor layer, an I type semiconductor layer, and an N type semiconductor layer are sequentially stacked.

[0056] Each of the first and second buffer layers 143 and 147 allows a hole and an electron to smoothly move through tunnel junction between the first to third optoelectric conversion layers 141, 145 and 149, and may be formed of a transparent conductive material that is easily removed by a wet etching process.

[0057] As illustrated in FIG. 2C, a transparent conductive layer 150 is formed on the optoelectric conversion layer 140.

[0058] The transparent conductive layer 150 diffuses solar light that has passed through the optoelectric conversion layer

140 to travel the solar light at various angles. Furthermore, the solar light is reflected by the below-described second electrode 170, and thus, the rate of light again incident on the optoelectric conversion layer 140 increases, thereby enhancing efficiency of a solar cell. In this case, the transparent conductive layer 150 may be formed of a transparent conductive material that is easily removed by the wet etching process, for example, any one of ZnO, ZnO:B, ZnO:Al, and ZnO:H. The transparent conductive layer 150 may not be formed.

[0059] As illustrated in FIG. 2D, a contact line 160 is formed by simultaneously removing a certain region of the optoelectric conversion layer 140 and a certain region of the transparent conductive layer 150 that are formed on the first electrode 120, through the laser scribing process. At this point, the contact line 160 is formed in parallel to the first separation part 130 to expose a certain region of the first electrode 120 adjacent to the first separation part 130.

[0060] As illustrated in FIG. 2E, a second electrode 170, which is connected to the first electrode 120 through the contact line 160 and is separated at a certain interval with a second separation part 180 therebetween, is printed on the optoelectric conversion layer 140. At this point, the second separation part 180 is formed on the transparent conductive layer 150 on the first electrode 120 in parallel to the contact line 160 to separate the second electrode 170 by a certain interval.

[0061] The second electrode 170 may be formed by one-time printing process using a metal paste including Ag, Al, Cu, Ag+Mo, Ag+Ni, or Ag+Cu.

[0062] The printing process may be a screen printing process, an inkjet printing process, a gravure printing process, a gravure offset printing process, a reverse printing process, a flexo printing process, or a micro contact printing process. Herein, the screen printing process is a process that lays ink on a screen, moves a squeegee while applying a certain pressure to the squeegee, and transfers the ink through a mesh of the screen. The inkjet printing process is a process that performs printing by colliding a very small blob of ink to a substrate. The gravure printing process is a process that removes ink, stained to a flat non-curve portion, with a doctor blade, and transfers only ink, stained to a concave curve portion that is formed through etching, to a substrate, thereby performing printing. The gravure offset printing process is a process that transfers ink from a printing plate to a blanket and again transfers the ink of the blanket to a substrate. The reverse printing process is a process that performs printing by using a solvent as ink. The flexo printing process is a process that stains ink to an embossed portion to perform printing. The micro contact printing process is a process that lays a desired material on a stamp and stamps the material as in a seal, thereby performing printing.

[0063] The second electrode 170 is printed by the printing process, and then a sintering process may be additionally performed for the printed second electrode 170.

[0064] As illustrated in FIG. 2F, by simultaneously removing the transparent conductive layer 150 and optoelectric conversion layer 140 in the second separation part 180 through a wet etching process using the second electrode 170 as a mask to expose the first electrode 120, a cell separation part 182 for separating the optoelectric conversion layer 140 is formed.

[0065] The wet etching process successively performs a primary cleaning process, an etching process, a secondary

cleaning process, and a dry process while continuously conveying the substrate **110** with a conveyor.

[0066] The primary cleaning process may include a foreign substance removing process and a first rinsing process.

[0067] The foreign substance removing process sprays first de-ionized water DI having a high pressure on the substrate **110** to remove a foreign substance from the substrate **110**. At this point, the first de-ionized water having a high pressure may be sprayed on a top and bottom of the substrate **110**.

[0068] The first rinsing process sprays second de-ionized water on the substrate **110**, for which a foreign substance removing process has been completed, to rinse the substrate **110**. At this point, the second de-ionized water may be sprayed on the top and bottom of the substrate **110**. Furthermore, the second de-ionized water, which is used in the first rinsing process and then recovered, may be used as the first de-ionized water that is used in the foreign substance removing process.

[0069] The etching process simultaneously removes the transparent conductive layer **150** and optoelectric conversion layer **140** in the second separation part **180** to expose the first electrode **120**, by using alkaline solution.

[0070] The etching process simultaneously removes the transparent conductive layer **150** and optoelectric conversion layer **140** in the second separation part **180** by sprinkling alkaline etching solution on the substrate **110** in a spray process. In this case, the alkaline etching solution may be sprayed at a pressure of about 0.5 Pa to about 2 Pa, and the sprayed alkaline etching solution may be sprayed to overlaps with each other over the substrate **110**.

[0071] The alkaline etching solution may use at least one solution selected from alkaline-based materials such as NaOH, NH_4OH and KOH, or use at least one solution selected from acidic solution such as HCl, HNO_3 , H_2SO_4 , H_3PO_3 , H_3PO_4 , H_2O_2 , HCOOH or $\text{C}_2\text{H}_2\text{O}_4$. In this case, using OH-series alkaline-based etching solution is optimal, but H-series acidic-based etching solution may be used.

[0072] Alkaline etching solution may be diluted with water and used, in which case the concentration of alkaline solution may be a range of about 5% to about 20%. Furthermore, the temperature of the alkaline etching solution may be maintained at about 60° C. to about 80° C., and an etching time may be a range of about 40 sec to about 80 sec.

[0073] In the etching process, since the first electrode **120** formed in the second separation part **180** is formed of a transparent conductive material, which is not easily removed by alkaline etching solution, such as SnO_2 , $\text{SnO}_2\text{:F}$, $\text{SnO}_2\text{:B}$, $\text{SnO}_2\text{:Al}$, or ITO, the first electrode **120** is not damaged by the etching process.

[0074] The secondary cleaning process may include a first rinsing process and a final rinsing process.

[0075] The second rinsing process sprays third de-ionized water on the substrate **110**, for which the etching process has been completed, to rinse (or clean) alkaline etching solution that is left on the substrate **110**. At this point, the third de-ionized water may be sprayed on the top and bottom of the substrate **110**. Furthermore, the third de-ionized water, which is used in the second rinsing process and then recovered, may be used as the second de-ionized water that is used in the first rinsing process.

[0076] The final rinsing process sprays fourth de-ionized water on the substrate **110**, for which the second rinsing process has been completed, to finally rinse the substrate **110**. At this point, the fourth de-ionized water may be sprayed on

the top and bottom of the substrate **110**. Furthermore, the fourth de-ionized water, which is used in the final rinsing process and then recovered, may be used as the third de-ionized water that is used in the second rinsing process.

[0077] The dry process dries the substrate **110** for which the final rinsing process has been completed, with an air knife. Herein, the air knife may be disposed to be inclined at a certain angle with respect to a direction in which the substrate **110** is conveyed.

[0078] The above-described method of manufacturing the thin film type solar cell, according to the first embodiment of the present invention, forms the second electrode **170** in the printing process and then forms the cell separation part **182** for separating the optoelectric conversion layer **140** in the wet etching process using the spray process, thus decreasing time taken in a process of forming the cell separation part **182**. Also, the method does not use the laser scribing process, and thus can reduce the cost. Herein, since the second electrode **170** is formed of a metal material, the second electrode **170** functions as a mask having properties that are not etched by the wet etching process, and thus, in the wet etching process using the spray process, only a region in the second separation part **182** is etched using the second electrode **170** as the mask.

[0079] FIGS. 3A to 3F are sectional views for sequentially describing a method of manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, according to a second embodiment of the present invention.

[0080] The method of manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, according to the second embodiment of the present invention, will be sequentially described below with reference to FIGS. 3A to 3F.

[0081] The method of manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, according to the second embodiment of the present invention, relates to a method of manufacturing a thin film type solar cell that is used in place of a window of a building. A detailed description on the same elements as the above-described elements will not be provided below, and like reference numerals refer to like elements throughout.

[0082] As illustrated in FIG. 3A, a first electrode **120** is formed over a substrate **110**, and then a first separation part **130** is formed by removing the first electrode **120** at certain intervals in order for a certain region of the substrate **110** to be exposed, through the laser scribing process.

[0083] As illustrated in FIG. 3B, an optoelectric conversion layer **140** is formed over the substrate **110** on which the first separation part **130** and the first electrode **120** are formed.

[0084] As illustrated in FIG. 3C, a transparent conductive layer **150** is formed on the optoelectric conversion layer **140**.

[0085] As illustrated in FIG. 3D, a contact line **160** is formed by removing a certain region of the optoelectric conversion layer **140** and a certain region of the transparent conductive layer **150** that are formed on the first electrode **120**, through the laser scribing process. At this point, the contact line **160** is formed in parallel to a first separation part **130** to expose a certain region of the first electrode **120** adjacent to the first separation part **130**.

[0086] As illustrated in FIG. 3E, a second electrode **170**, which is connected to the first electrode **120** through the contact line **160** and is separated by a certain interval with a second separation part **180** therebetween, is printed on the optoelectric conversion layer **140**. At this point, the second separation part **180** includes a cell separation pattern **182a** that is formed on the transparent conductive layer **150** on the first electrode **120** in parallel to the contact line **160** and

separates the second electrode **170** at certain intervals, and a light transmission pattern **184a** that is formed by removing the second electrode **170** in a certain pattern.

[0087] The second electrode **170** is printed by the printing process, and then a sintering process may be additionally performed for the printed second electrode **170**.

[0088] As illustrated in FIG. 3F, by simultaneously removing the transparent conductive layer **150** and optoelectric conversion layer **140** in the cell separation pattern **182a** and light transmission pattern **184a** through the wet etching process using the second electrode **170** as a mask to expose the first electrode **120**, the cell separation part **182** is formed, and simultaneously a light transmission part **184** that exposes the first electrode **120** for solar cell to be transmitted is formed. Herein, the wet etching process is the same as that of the first embodiment using the spray process with alkaline etching solution, and thus, its description will be applied to the below-described embodiment.

[0089] The light transmission pattern **184a** of the second separation part **180**, as illustrated in FIG. 3F, may be formed in a stripe type intersecting the cell separation pattern **182a**, but the embodiment is not limited thereto. The light transmission pattern **184a** may be formed in various types. For example, the light transmission pattern **184a**, as illustrated in FIG. 4A, may be formed in a curved shape, or as illustrated in FIG. 4B, may be prepared in a character shape. Also, although not shown, the light transmission pattern **184a** may be formed in at least one of a figure shape, a sign shape, and a character shape, and formed in various shapes depending on the case.

[0090] The above-described method of manufacturing the thin film type solar cell, according to the second embodiment of the present invention, forms the second electrode **170** in the printing process, and then forms the cell separation part **182** for separating the optoelectric conversion layer **140** in the wet etching process using the spray process and simultaneously forms the light transmission part **184** at the second electrode **170**. Therefore, the method according to the second embodiment of the present invention does not use the laser scribing process, and thus can decrease the cost, more shorten time taken in a process than the related art laser scribing process, secure a prospect right sufficient to apply a solar cell in place of a window by using the cell separation part **182** and the light transmission part **184**, and facilitate mass production.

[0091] FIG. 5 is a block diagram schematically illustrating an apparatus for manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0092] Referring to FIG. 5, the apparatus for manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, according to an embodiment of the present invention, includes a loading unit **200**, a first electrode forming unit **210**, an electrode separating unit **220**, an optoelectric conversion layer forming unit **230**, a contact line forming unit **240**, a printing unit **250**, a sintering unit **260**, an etching process unit **270**, and an unloading unit **280**.

[0093] The loading unit **200** provides a substrate (not shown) to the first electrode forming unit **210**. Herein, the substrate may be a glass substrate, a metal substrate, a plastic substrate, or a flexible substrate.

[0094] The first electrode forming unit **210**, as illustrated in FIGS. 2A and 3A, forms the first electrode **120** that is formed of a transparent conductive material such as SnO_2 , $\text{SnO}_2\text{:F}$, $\text{SnO}_2\text{:B}$, $\text{SnO}_2\text{:Al}$, or ITO, over the substrate **210** provided by the loading unit **200**. The first electrode forming unit **210** may

form the first electrode **120** in the CVD process. The first electrode forming unit **210** may be configured in a cluster type or an inline type.

[0095] As illustrated in FIG. 2A or 3A, the electrode separating unit **220** removes a certain region of the first electrode **120** that is formed over the substrate by the first electrode forming unit **210** and thus forms the first separation part **130** for separating the first electrode **120** at certain intervals. At this point, the electrode separating unit **220** may form the first separation part **130** in the laser scribing process.

[0096] Since the first electrode **120** is a surface on which solar light is incident, the solar light is required to be maximally absorbed to inside a solar cell, for which a texturing unit (not shown) for forming a texture at the surface of the first electrode **20** may be disposed between the first electrode forming unit **210** and the electrode separating unit **220**.

[0097] As illustrated in FIG. 2B or 3B, the optoelectric conversion layer forming unit **230** forms the optoelectric conversion layer **140**, over the substrate on which the first separation part **130** and the first electrode **120** are formed. The optoelectric conversion layer forming unit **230** forms at least one optoelectric conversion layer, which is formed in a PIN structure where a P type semiconductor layer, an I type semiconductor layer, and an N type semiconductor layer are sequentially stacked, over the substrate by using a plurality of chambers that are disposed in a cluster type to perform the CVD process. As illustrated in the enlarged portion A of FIG. 2B or the enlarged portion B of FIG. 3B, when the optoelectric conversion layer **140** is formed in a multiple-stacked structure, namely, a tandem structure or a triple structure, the buffer layers **143** and **147** are formed between the optoelectric conversion layers **141**, **145** and **149**.

[0098] As illustrated in FIG. 2C or 3C, the apparatus for manufacturing the thin film type solar cell, according to an embodiment of the present invention, may further include a transparent conductive layer forming unit **235** that forms the transparent conductive layer **150** on the optoelectric conversion layer **140**.

[0099] The transparent conductive layer forming unit **235** forms the transparent conductive layer **150** on the optoelectric conversion layer **140**, in a Metal Organic Chemical Vapor Deposition (MOCVD) process or a Plasma-Enhanced Chemical Vapor Deposition (PECVD). In this case, the transparent conductive layer **150** may be formed of a transparent conductive material that is easily removed by the wet etching process, for example, any one of ZnO , ZnO:B , ZnO:Al , and ZnO:H . The transparent conductive layer **150** may not be formed according to the structure of a solar cell, in which case the transparent conductive layer forming unit **245** is not also provided.

[0100] As illustrated in FIG. 2D or 3D, the contact line forming unit **240** forms the contact line **160** by simultaneously removing a certain region of the optoelectric conversion layer **140** and a certain region of the transparent conductive layer **150** that are formed on the first electrode **120** adjacent to the first separation part **130**. Therefore, the optoelectric conversion layer **140** is separated at certain intervals with the contact line **160** therebetween. The contact line forming unit **240** may form the contact line **160** in the laser scribing process.

[0101] As illustrated in FIG. 2E, the printing unit **250** according to the first embodiment of the present invention prints the second electrode **170**, which is connected to the first electrode **120** through the contact line **160** and is separated by

a certain interval with the second separation part **180** therebetween, on the optoelectric conversion layer **150**. At this point, the second separation part **180** is formed on the transparent conductive layer **150** on the first electrode **120** in parallel to the contact line **160** to separate the second electrode **170** at certain intervals.

[0102] The printing unit **250** forms the second electrode **170** through one-time printing process using a metal paste including Ag, Al, Cu, Ag+Mo, Ag+Ni, or Ag+Cu.

[0103] The printing unit **250** may perform the printing process such as the screen printing process, inkjet printing process, gravure printing process, gravure offset printing process, reverse printing process, flexo printing process, or micro contact printing process.

[0104] As illustrated in FIG. 3E, a printing unit **250** according to the second embodiment of the present invention prints the second electrode **170**, which is connected to the first electrode **120** through the contact line **160** and is separated by a certain interval with the second separation part **180** therebetween, on the optoelectric conversion layer **150**. At this point, the second separation part **180** includes the cell separation pattern **182a** that is formed on the transparent conductive layer **150** on the first electrode **120** in parallel to the contact line **160** and separates the second electrode **170** at certain intervals, and the light transmission pattern **184a** from which the second electrode **170** separated by the cell separation pattern **182a** has been removed in a certain pattern.

[0105] The printing unit **250** forms the second electrode **170** through one-time printing process using a metal paste including Ag, Al, Cu, Ag+Mo, Ag+Ni, or Ag+Cu.

[0106] The sintering unit **260** removes a solvent that is volatilized from a paste of the second electrode **170** through heat treatment such as heating of the substrate on which the second electrode **170** has been printed by the printing unit **250**, thereby sintering the second electrode **170**.

[0107] The etching process unit **270**, as illustrated in FIG. 2F, simultaneously removes the transparent conductive layer **150** and optoelectric conversion layer **140** in the second separation part **180** though the wet etching process based on the spray process using the second electrode **170** as the mask, and thus forms the cell separation part **180** exposing the first electrode **120**. Alternatively, the etching process unit **270**, as illustrated in FIG. 2F, simultaneously removes the transparent conductive layer **150** and optoelectric conversion layer **140** in the cell separation pattern **182a** and light transmission pattern **184a** to form the light transmission part **184** and the cell separation part **182** exposing the first electrode **120**.

[0108] The unloading unit **280** unloads a substrate, for which an etching process has been completed by the etching process unit **270**, to the outside.

[0109] FIG. 6 is a view schematically illustrating an etching process of FIG. 5.

[0110] Referring to FIGS. 5 and 6, the etching process unit **270** includes a conveyor **310**, a bath **320**, primary cleaning units **330** and **340**, a wet etching unit **350**, secondary cleaning units **360** and **370**, and a drying unit **380**.

[0111] The conveyor **310** is installed to pass through a side of the bath **320**, and conveys the substrate **110** on which the second electrode **170** has been formed. For this end, as illustrated in FIG. 7, the conveyor **310** includes first and second conveyor frames **311a** and **311b**, a plurality of driving shafts **313**, a plurality of rollers **315**, a driving motor **317**, and a plurality of guide rollers **319**.

[0112] The first and second conveyor frames **311a** and **311b** are installed side by side to be separated by a certain interval.

[0113] Each of the driving shafts **313** is rotatably installed so as to have a certain interval between the first and second conveyor frames **311a** and **311b**.

[0114] The rollers **315** are installed at certain intervals, on each of the driving shafts **313** and convey the substrate **110** with the rotation of the driving shaft **313**.

[0115] The driving motor **317** is installed at an outer side of the first conveyor frame **311a** to simultaneously rotate the driving shafts **313**. At this point, the rotating force of the driving motor **317** is transferred to the driving shafts **313** through a rotation transferring member (not shown) that is installed inside the first conveyor frame **311a**. The rotation transferring member is coupled to the rotating shaft of the driving motor **317** and each of the driving shafts **313**, and may be configured with a chain module, a gear module, or a belt module.

[0116] Some of the guide rollers **319** are rotatably installed at a top of the first conveyor frame **311a**, and the other guide rollers **319** are rotatably installed at a top of the second conveyor frame **311b**. The guide rollers **319** guide both sides of the substrate **110** that is conveyed by the rollers **315**, thus preventing the substrate **110** from deviating from the conveyor **310**.

[0117] The bath **320** is disposed to cover the conveyor **310**, and provides a space for the wet etching process. In this case, the conveyor **310** is installed to pass through one side wall and other side wall of the bath **320**, and horizontally conveys the substrate **110**.

[0118] The bath **320** is divided into a plurality of spaces for performing the wet etching process for the substrate **110** that is conveyed by the conveyor **310**. That is, the bath **320** is divided into a first rinsing zone **322** where the foreign substance removing unit **330** and the first rinsing unit **340** are disposed, an etching zone **324** where the wet etching unit **350** is disposed, a second rinsing zone **326** where the second rinsing unit **360** and the final rinsing unit **370** are disposed, and a drying zone **328** where the drying unit **380** is disposed.

[0119] The primary cleaning units **330** and **340** may include the foreign substance removing unit **330** and the first rinsing unit **340**.

[0120] The foreign substance removing unit **330** is installed at one side of the first rinsing zone **322**, and sprays the first de-ionized water having a high pressure on the substrate **110** that is conveyed by the driving of the conveyor **310**, thereby removing a foreign substance from the substrate **110**. For this end, the foreign substance removing unit **330** includes at least two first spray nozzles **332**.

[0121] The at least two first spray nozzles **332** are installed at certain intervals on one side of the first rinsing zone **322** to be disposed on the conveyor **310**, and sprays the first de-ionized water having a high pressure on the substrate **110**, thereby removing a foreign substance from the substrate **110**. Herein, the at least two first spray nozzles **332** may be installed at certain intervals on and under one side of the first rinsing zone **322** with the conveyor **310** therebetween, and spray the first de-ionized water on an upper surface and lower surface of the substrate **110**.

[0122] The first rinsing unit **340** is installed at the other side of the first rinsing zone **322** adjacently to the foreign substance removing unit **330**, and sprays the second de-ionized water on the substrate **110** that is conveyed by the driving of

the conveyor **310**, thereby rinsing (or cleaning) the substrate **110**. For this end, the first rinsing unit **340** includes at least two second spray nozzles **342**.

[0123] The at least two second spray nozzles **342** are installed at certain intervals on the other side of the first rinsing zone **322** to be disposed on the conveyor **310**, and sprays the second de-ionized water on the substrate **110** that is conveyed through the foreign substance removing unit **330**, thereby rinsing the substrate **110**. In this case, the second de-ionized water, which is sprayed by the at least two second spray nozzles **342**, may be sprayed to overlap with each other over the substrate **110**.

[0124] The at least two second spray nozzles **342** may be installed at certain intervals on and under the other side of the first rinsing zone **322** with the conveyor **310** therebetween, and spray the second de-ionized water on an upper surface and lower surface of the substrate **110**.

[0125] Furthermore, the second de-ionized water, which is used in the first rinsing unit **340** and then recovered, may be used as the first de-ionized water that is used in the foreign substance removing unit **330**.

[0126] The etching process unit **350** sprays alkaline etching solution on the substrate **110** that is conveyed through the first rinsing unit **340** by the driving of the conveyor **310** to perform the etching process using the second electrode **170** as the mask, and thus, as illustrated in FIG. 2F, the etching process unit **350** simultaneously removes the transparent conductive layer **150** and optoelectric conversion layer **140** in the second separation part **180** to form the cell separation part **180** exposing the first electrode **120**. Alternatively, as illustrated in FIG. 3F, the etching process unit **350** simultaneously removes the transparent conductive layer **150** and optoelectric conversion layer **140** in the cell separation pattern **182a** and light transmission pattern **184a** to form the light transmission part **184** and the cell separation part **182** exposing the first electrode **120**.

[0127] For this end, the first rinsing unit **350** according to the first embodiment of the present invention includes a plurality of etching solution spray nozzles **352**.

[0128] The etching solution spray nozzles **352** are installed at certain intervals on the etching zone **324** to be disposed on the conveyor **310**, and sprays alkaline etching solution on the substrate **110**. In this case, alkaline etching solution sprayed from the etching solution spray nozzles **352** may be sprayed at a pressure of about 0.5 Pa to about 2 Pa, and the sprayed alkaline etching solution may be sprayed to overlaps with each other over the substrate **110**.

[0129] The alkaline etching solution may use at least one solution selected from alkaline-based materials such as NaOH and KOH, or use at least one solution selected from acidic solution such as HCl, HNO₃, H₂SO₄, H₃PO₃, H₂O₂, or C₂H₂O₄. In this case, using OH-series alkaline-based etching solution is optimal, but H-series acidic-based etching solution may be used.

[0130] The alkaline etching solution may be diluted with water and used, in which case the concentration of alkaline solution may be a range of about 5% to about 20%. Furthermore, the temperature of the alkaline etching solution may be maintained at about 60° C. to about 80° C., and an etching time may be a range of about 40 sec to about 80 sec.

[0131] In the etching process, since the first electrode **120** formed in the second separation part **180** is formed of a

conductive material that which is not easily removed by the alkaline etching solution, the first electrode **120** is not damaged by the etching process.

[0132] The wet etching unit **350** according to the second embodiment of the present invention, as illustrated in FIG. 8A, includes a plurality of etching solution spray nozzles **352**, a nozzle supporting member **354**, a central support member (e.g., a swing axis) **356**, and a driving means **358**.

[0133] The etching solution spray nozzles **352** are installed at certain intervals on the etching zone **324** to be disposed on the conveyor **310**, and sprays alkaline etching solution on the substrate **110**. For this end, each of the etching solution spray nozzles **352** include a plurality of spray holes that are formed at certain intervals. Herein, a plurality of spray holes formed an adjacent etching solution spray nozzle **352** may be alternately disposed not to overlap with each other.

[0134] The nozzle supporting member **354** is installed across the etching solution spray nozzles **352** to support the etching solution spray nozzles **352**. The nozzle supporting member **354** is formed in a bar type to support a central portion of each of the etching solution spray nozzles **352**, or formed in a trapezoid type to support a central portion and both edges of each of the etching solution spray nozzles **352**.

[0135] The swing axis **356** is installed at the nozzle supporting member **354** and driven by the driving of a driving means (not shown) to swing the nozzle supporting member **354** by a certain distance in a $\pm Y$ -axis direction. Herein, the Y-axis direction is a direction intersecting the conveyed direction of the substrate **110**. The swing axis **356** is sealed by bellows (not shown) or a sealing member (not shown), and thus can prevent a solar cell from being damaged by etching steam in etching.

[0136] The driving means **358** according to an embodiment of the present invention includes a camshaft (not shown) performing a rotating motion, an eccentric cam (not shown) that is installed to swing in the $\pm Y$ -axis direction according to the rotating motion of the camshaft, and a driving motor (not shown) rotating the camshaft.

[0137] The driving motor is driven by a driving power having a driving frequency of about 10 Hz to about 50 Hz to rotate the camshaft, and thus moves or swings the central support member or swing axis **356** in correspondence with the driving frequency of about 10 Hz to about 50 Hz.

[0138] The driving means **358** according to another embodiment of the present invention includes a pinion that alternately performs a rotating motion counterclockwise and clockwise, a rack that is installed at the swing axis **356** to swing in the $\pm Y$ -axis direction according to the rotating motion of the pinion, and a driving motor rotating the pinion.

[0139] The wet etching unit **350** according to a second embodiment of the present invention swings the etching solution spray nozzles **352** in the $\pm Y$ -axis direction to conformally spray alkaline etching solution on the substrate **110**, thereby allowing conformal etching to be performed.

[0140] The wet etching unit **350** according to the second embodiment of the present invention swings the etching solution spray nozzles **352** in the $\pm Y$ -axis direction, but the embodiment is not limited thereto. The wet etching unit **350**, as illustrated in FIG. 8B, may swing the etching solution spray nozzles **352** in a $\pm X$ -axis direction equal to a direction where the substrate **110** is conveyed.

[0141] As another example, the wet etching unit **350** according to the second embodiment of the present invention, as illustrated in FIG. 8C, may rotate and reversely rotate the

etching solution spray nozzles 352 at a certain $\pm$ angle, repeatedly. For this end, the driving means 358 may be configured with a driving motor that is coupled to the swing axis 356 to rotate and reversely rotate the swing axis 356 at a certain $\pm\beta$ angle repeatedly.

[0142] Referring again to FIG. 6, the secondary cleaning units 360 and 370 may include the second rinsing unit 360 and the final rinsing unit 370.

[0143] The second rinsing unit 360 is installed at one side of the second rinsing zone 326 adjacently to the wet etching unit 350 to spray the third de-ionized water on the substrate 110 that is conveyed by the driving of the conveyor 310, thereby rinsing (or cleaning) the substrate 110. For this end, the second rinsing unit 360 includes at least two third spray nozzles 362.

[0144] The at least two third spray nozzles 362 are installed at certain intervals on one side of the second rinsing zone 326 to be disposed on the conveyor 310, and sprays the third de-ionized water on the substrate 110 that is conveyed through the wet etching unit 350, thereby rinsing the substrate 110. In this case, the third de-ionized water, which is sprayed by the at least two third spray nozzles 362, may be sprayed to overlap with each other over the substrate 110.

[0145] The at least two third spray nozzles 362 may be installed at certain intervals on and under one side of the second rinsing zone 326 with the conveyor 310 therebetween, and spray the third de-ionized water on an upper surface and lower surface of the substrate 110.

[0146] Furthermore, the third de-ionized water, which is used in the second rinsing unit 360 and then recovered, may be used as the second de-ionized water that is used in the first rinsing unit 340.

[0147] The final rinsing unit 370 is installed at the other side of the second rinsing zone 326 to spray the fourth de-ionized water on the substrate 110 that is conveyed by the driving of the conveyor 310, thereby rinsing (or cleaning) the substrate 110 finally. For this end, the final rinsing unit 370 includes at least two fourth spray nozzles 372.

[0148] The at least two fourth spray nozzles 372 are installed at certain intervals on the other side of the second rinsing zone 326 to be disposed on the conveyor 310, and sprays the fourth de-ionized water on the substrate 110 that is conveyed through the second rinsing unit 360, thereby rinsing the substrate 110 finally. In this case, the fourth de-ionized water, which is sprayed by the at least two fourth spray nozzles 372, may be sprayed to overlap with each other over the substrate 110.

[0149] The at least two fourth spray nozzles 372 may be installed at certain intervals on and under the other side of the second rinsing zone 326 with the conveyor 310 therebetween, and spray the fourth de-ionized water on an upper surface and lower surface of the substrate 110.

[0150] Furthermore, the fourth de-ionized water, which is used in the final rinsing unit 370 and then recovered, may be used as the third de-ionized water that is used in the second rinsing unit 360.

[0151] The drying unit 380 is installed at the drying zone 328 adjacent to the second rinsing zone 326 to dry the substrate 110 that is conveyed by the driving of the conveyor 310. That is, the drying unit 380 removes moisture left on the substrate 110 that is conveyed through the final rinsing unit 370, with an air knife 382 that is disposed on the conveyor 310, thereby performing drying. Herein, the air knife 382 may

be disposed to be inclined at a certain angle with respect to a direction in which the substrate 110 is conveyed.

[0152] In the etching process unit 270, when the second de-ionized water is left on the substrate 110 that has passed through the first rinsing unit 340, since the alkaline etching solution sprayed by the wet etching unit 350 is mixed with the second de-ionized water, the alkaline etching solution is contaminated, and thus, etching is non-conformally performed. Also, the alkaline etching solution sprayed on the substrate 110 flows into the first rinsing unit 340, is used by the first rinsing unit 340 and then recovered, and thus, the second de-ionized water used as the first de-ionized water is contaminated.

[0153] Moreover, in the etching process unit 270, when the alkaline etching solution is left on the substrate 110 that has passed through the wet etching unit 350, the third de-ionized water, which is recovered by the second rinsing unit 360 and reused as the second de-ionized water, is contaminated.

[0154] To prevent the limitations, as illustrated in FIG. 9, the etching process unit 270 may further include first and second neutral zones 345 and 355.

[0155] The first neutral zone 345 is installed between the first rinsing unit 340 and the wet etching unit 350, and prevents the second de-ionized water used by the first rinsing unit 340 from being mixed with the alkaline etching solution used by the wet etching unit 350. For this end, as illustrated in FIG. 10, the first neutral zone 345 includes first and second air curtains 347 and 349.

[0156] The first air curtain 347 is installed on one side of the first neutral zone 345 adjacently to the primarily cleaning unit to spray air or other gas such as nitrogen or argon toward a substrate outlet of the primary cleaning unit. Specifically, the first air curtain 347 is installed on one side of the first neutral zone 345 adjacently to the first rinsing unit 340 to spray a gas (e.g., air) of a certain pressure on the substrate 110 that is conveyed through the first rinsing unit 340 by the driving of the conveyor 310, and thus injects the second de-ionized, which is left on the substrate 110, to inside the first rinsing unit 340.

[0157] The second air curtain 349 is installed adjacently to the wet etching unit 350 to spray air or other gas such as nitrogen or argon toward a substrate inlet of the wet etching unit 350 into which a substrate passing through the first air curtain 347 is put. Specifically, the second air curtain 349 is installed on the other side of the first neutral zone 345 adjacently to the wet etching unit 350 to spray a gas (e.g., air) of a certain pressure on the substrate 110 that is conveyed through the first air curtain 347 by the driving of the conveyor 310, and thus injects alkaline etching solution ES, which is sprayed by the wet etching unit 250 and left on the substrate 110, to inside the wet etching unit 350.

[0158] Each of the first and second air curtains 347 and 349 may be installed on and under the first neutral zone 345 with the conveyor 310 therebetween, and spray air or other gas on the upper surface and lower surface of the substrate 110.

[0159] Referring again to FIG. 9, the second neutral zone 355 is installed between the second rinsing unit 360 and the wet etching unit 350, and prevents the third de-ionized water used by the second rinsing unit 360 from being mixed with the alkaline etching solution used by the wet etching unit 350. For this end, the second neutral zone 355 includes third and fourth air curtains 357 and 359.

[0160] The third air curtain 357 is installed adjacently to the wet etching unit 350 to spray air or other gas such as nitrogen

or argon toward a substrate outlet of the wet etching unit **350** for discharging a substrate for which the wet etching process has been completed. Specifically, the third air curtain **357** is installed on the other side of the first neutral zone **355** adjacently to the wet etching unit **350** to spray a gas (e.g., air) of a certain pressure on the substrate **110** that is conveyed through the wet etching unit **350** by the driving of the conveyor **310**, and thus injects alkaline etching solution, which is left on the substrate **110**, to inside the wet etching unit **350**.

[0161] The fourth air curtain **359** is installed adjacently to the secondary cleaning unit to spray air or other gas such as nitrogen or argon toward a substrate inlet of the secondary cleaning unit into which a substrate passing through the third air curtain **357** is put. Specifically, the fourth air curtain **359** is installed on the other side of the second neutral zone **355** adjacently to the second rinsing unit **360** to spray a gas (e.g., air) of a certain pressure on the substrate **110** that is conveyed through the third air curtain **357** by the driving of the conveyor **310**, and thus injects the third de-ionized, which is sprayed by the second rinsing unit **360** and left on the substrate **110**, to inside the second rinsing unit **360**.

[0162] Each of the third and fourth air curtains **357** and **359** may be installed on and under the second neutral zone **355** with the conveyor **310** therebetween, and spray air or other gas on the upper surface and lower surface of the substrate **110**.

[0163] The above-described method of manufacturing the thin film type solar cell, according to the embodiments of the present invention, forms the second electrode **170** in the printing process, and then forms the cell separation part **182** for separating the optoelectric conversion layer **140** in the wet etching process using the spray process, or forms the light transmission part **184** at the cell separation part **182** and the second electrode **170**. Therefore, the method does not use the laser scribing process, and thus can decrease the cost, more shorten time taken in a process than the related art laser scribing process, secure a prospect right sufficient to apply a solar cell in place of a window by using the cell separation part **182** and the light transmission part **184**, and facilitate mass production.

[0164] As described above, the apparatus and method for manufacturing the thin film type solar cell, according to the embodiments of the present invention, forms the second electrode through the printing process, and thereafter forms the cell separation part that separates the optoelectric conversion layer through the wet etching process using the second electrode as a mask, or forms the light transmission part in the cell separation part and the second electrode.

[0165] Accordingly, by forming the second electrode/cell separation part or the second electrode/cell separation part/light transmission part through the printing process and the wet etching process, the apparatus and method according to the embodiments of the present invention can shorten time taken in a process that is performed for the second electrode/cell separation part or the second electrode/cell separation part/light transmission part, thus enhancing productivity.

[0166] Moreover, by forming the cell separation part and the light transmission part through the wet etching process instead of the related art laser scribing process, the apparatus and method according to the embodiments of the present invention can secure a prospect right sufficient to apply the solar cell in place of a window, enhance productivity, and reduce the cost.

[0167] It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications and variations can be made in the present invention without departing from the spirit or scope of the inventions. Thus, it is intended that the present invention covers the modifications and variations of this invention provided they come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.

What is claimed is:

1. An apparatus for manufacturing a thin film type solar cell, the apparatus comprising:
 - a first electrode forming unit configured to form a first electrode on a substrate and a first separation part separating the first electrode;
 - an optoelectric conversion layer forming unit configured to form an optoelectric conversion layer over the substrate, substrate further comprising the first electrode and the first separation part;
 - a contact line forming unit configured to remove a certain region of the optoelectric conversion layer on the first electrode to form a contact line;
 - a printing unit configured to print a plurality of second electrodes on the optoelectric conversion layer and in the contact line, the second electrodes being connected to the first electrode through the contact line, such that adjacent second electrodes are separated at certain intervals by a second separation part;
 - an etching process unit configured to remove the optoelectric conversion layer in the second separation part to expose the first electrode in the second separation part using a wet etching process; wherein the etching process unit comprises:
 - a conveyor configured to convey a substrate having the second electrodes thereon through a wet etching unit;
 - a primary cleaning unit configured to clean the substrate conveyed by the conveyor;
 - a first air curtain configured to spray air toward a substrate outlet of the primary cleaning unit;
 - a wet etching unit configured to perform the wet etching process by spraying etching solution on the substrate conveyed through the primary cleaning unit by the conveyor;
 - a second air curtain configured to spray air toward a substrate inlet of the wet etching unit;
 - a secondary cleaning unit configured to clean the substrate conveyed through the wet etching unit by the conveyor; and
 - a drying unit configured to dry the substrate conveyed through the secondary cleaning unit by the conveyor.
2. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the first electrode comprises a transparent conductive material not removed by the wet etching process.
3. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the transparent conductive material is selected from the group consisting of SnO_2 , $\text{SnO}_2:\text{F}$, $\text{SnO}_2:\text{B}$, $\text{SnO}_2:\text{Al}$, and indium tin oxide (ITO).
4. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the second separation part comprises:
 - a cell separation pattern separating the second electrode at certain intervals; and
 - a light transmission pattern exposed by the second electrode in a certain pattern.

5. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a transparent conductive layer forming unit configured to form a transparent conductive layer on the optoelectric conversion layer; wherein

the contact line forming unit is configured to remove a certain region of the transparent conductive layer and the certain region of the optoelectric conversion layer to form the contact line, and

the etching process unit is configured to remove the transparent conductive layer and the optoelectric conversion layer in the second separation part to expose the first electrode.

6. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the etching solution comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of NaOH, KOH, NH_4OH , HCl, HNO_3 , H_2SO_4 , H_3PO_3 , H_3PO_4 , H_2O_2 , HCOOH , and $\text{C}_2\text{H}_2\text{O}_4$.

7. The apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the etching solution comprises at least one member selected from the group consisting of NaOH, KOH, HCl, HNO_3 , H_2SO_4 , H_3PO_3 , H_2O_2 , and $\text{C}_2\text{H}_2\text{O}_4$.

8. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the wet etching unit comprises:

a plurality of etching solution spray nozzles at certain intervals on the conveyor, configured to spray the etching solution on the substrate;

a nozzle supporting member supporting the etching solution spray nozzles;

a central support member configured to supporting the nozzle supporting member; and

a driver configured to move or swing the central support member by a predetermined distance or a predetermined angle.

9. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the etching process unit further comprises a first neutral zone between the primary cleaning unit and the wet etching unit, wherein the first neutral zone comprises the first air curtain adjacent to the primary cleaning unit, and the second air curtain adjacent to the wet etching unit.

10. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the etching process unit further comprises a second neutral zone between the secondary cleaning unit and the wet etching unit, the second neutral zone comprising:

a third air curtain adjacent to the wet etching unit, configured to spray air toward the substrate outlet of the wet etching unit; and

a fourth air curtain adjacent to the secondary cleaning unit, configured to spray air toward the substrate inlet of the secondary cleaning unit.

11. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the printing unit prints a paste comprising at least one of Ag, Al, and Cu on the optoelectric conversion layer to form the second electrode.

12. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the optoelectric conversion layer comprises a silicon-based semiconductor material.

13. The apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the optoelectric conversion layer comprises a P-type semiconductor layer, an I-type semiconductor layer, and an N-type semiconductor layer in sequence.

14. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the optoelectric conversion layer comprises a first optoelectric conversion layer, a buffer layer, and a second optoelectric conversion layer in sequence.

15. The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the buffer layer comprises a transparent conductive material exposed when wet etching the optoelectric conversion layer.

16. The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the optoelectric conversion layer further comprises a second buffer layer on the second optoelectric conversion layer and a third optoelectric conversion layer thereon.

17. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the contact line is parallel to the first separation part and exposes a region of the first electrode adjacent to the first separation part.

18. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the printing unit prints the plurality of second electrodes by screen printing, inkjet printing, gravure printing, gravure offset printing, reverse printing, flexographic printing, or microcontact printing.

19. The apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a sintering unit configured to sinter the printed second electrode.

20. The apparatus according to claim 4, wherein the light transmission pattern comprises a stripe-type shape that intersects the cell separation pattern, a curved shape, a figure shape, a sign shape, or a character shape.

* * * * *