

## **SAIL is much bigger than the sum of its plants**

Dear Friends,

What is the contribution of a steel plant in a country's march towards progress, in a Nation's tryst with her destiny? Why is steel of critical importance in the entire economic configuration of a society? Are a people, who produce and consume more steel better off? As we march into 21<sup>st</sup> century, with woefully low per capita consumption of steel, where do we stand as a nation? More importantly, what role will steel play in India's economic resurgence, in her stride into the future?

As we ask ourselves these questions, the manufacturing behemoth Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) is celebrating its 50 th anniversary. What stared as a glitter in Pt.Nehru's eyes is today a conglomerate that is capable of claiming its seat in any conglomeration of steel makers in the world. How have these last fifty years been? What have been the travails on the way? Who are the men who have steered the entity through times good and bad? What has been SAIL's contribution to the Nation at large?

From a time when production and consumption of steel was controlled, to a regime of open competition. From near monopoly to fierce market dynamics. From budgetary support to consistent profit making. From community development to CER- the SAIL story can be recounted on many levels, from various angles, viewed in myriad hues. For when a story of such epic proportions unfold, even the protagonists are often too small to comprehend the full import of what is happening around them. Same eyes that go misty, when they try to recount the tale, indeed, "those were the days..."

A steel plant is no mere stand alone industrial unit. It comes with teeming colonies, with people who have their little dreams, their ambitions, their hopes that intermingle. It comes with support service providers, with the ancillary units with a whole society that grows around it. SAIL too, is much bigger than the sum of its plants.

The study of the SAIL story is important for in it are embedded the answer that we will seek more and more in the years to come.

We have tried to compile a definitive account how SAIL became what it is today sprinkled with tid bits about its size, scope and strengths. Do get back with your comments, suggestions. We have indeed worked hard to compile this issue and your little words of encouragement (not to mention the scathing admonitions) that keep us going.

Suvobrata Ganguly  
Editor