

Steelworld

(ISO 9001 : 2008 Certified)

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PRICE

(Inclusive of Service Tax 12.36%)

1 Year	₹ 3371	US\$ 253
2 Years	₹ 6461	US\$ 449
3 Years	₹ 9551	US\$ 646

(Only by Subscription)

Printed & Published by : D. A. Chandekar for Sanket Prakashan at 1, Alpha, M. G. Road, Vile Parle (E), Mumbai - 57. Printed at C. C. Printer, 30 Kamdar Shopping Centre, Monghibai Road, Vile Parle (E), Mumbai - 400 057.
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Editorial Desk

Before 2009, Middle – East was seen as one of the fastest growing regions in terms of steel consumption, thanks to the infrastructure development and construction activity all over. It is also a fact that the region lacked melting capacity but many rolling, processing lines mushroomed all over the region. Steel fabrication too acquired importance due to requirement of huge, intricate residential and industrial structures. The region was net importer of steel and CIS, Turkey, China were the preferred suppliers. During 2009 meltdown, the regional economy did get a jolt and the developmental activity drastically reduced followed by reduction in steel consumption. Now 5-6 years later, the region as such is gradually stabilizing in terms of industrial activity, infrastructure projects and the steel consumption is also rising steadily.

The Middle East and the North African region commonly known as MENA, is considered to be one of the fastest growing regions as regards industrial and economic activity. The Middle – East region is very strategically located. On one side it connects with Indian subcontinent from where it gets a good supply of technically qualified manpower. It also receives some raw materials like ferro alloys, iron ore, refractories etc. On the other hand it is connected with Europe which is conventionally supposed to be high end market. In a way, Middle-East acts as a gateway to Europe. Another factor which is becoming increasingly important is 'Africa'. African markets are also heating up and industrial activity is gradually increasing. Though their present steel making capacity is small, the consumption has started growing. Few iron & steel projects, though small in size, are being planned and executed in Africa. Middle – East region has become a gateway for Africa too !

I hope to see a gradual and steady growth in industrial activity as well as in iron and steel industry of the region. The next one or two quarters are supposed to be very crucial and will decide the future direction of iron & steel industry in Middle-East region. Of course, as mentioned earlier, Indian steel business houses should be having lot of interest in ME steel industry, firstly as it offers a tremendous export opportunity to Indian steel mills. Further, Indian technology and equipment suppliers can gain from expansion projects from this region. Lastly the ME region needs technical manpower, middle and top level management personal and India can very well fulfill this need.

D. A. Chandekar