



Al Jazeera Steel Diversifies into Niche Products

In the industrial scene of the Sultanate of Oman, for the first time in Oman, Electric Resistance Welded (ERW) tubular products in circular square, and rectangular hollow sections were manufactured at Al Jazeera Steel Products Co. SAOG (Formerly known as Al Jazeera Tube Mills Company S.A.O.G.)

Promoted by a group of Omani entrepreneurs with a fairly large holdings with the general public of the Sultanate, Al Jazeera has become one of the leading tubing manufacturers in the Middle East. From its modern plant located at Sohar (Oman) Al Jazeera offers Mild Steel ERW tubular products in both Black and Galvanized class with plain end and threaded and coupled ends conforming to API, ASTM, BS, DIN, EN and other International specifications.

Al Jazeera boasts of installing some of the latest and most modern machineries in the plant. Al Jazeera's manufacturing facilities include four production lines supplied by M/s. Abbey Etna Inc., Ohio, USA; M/s. TRM Thailand and M/s. Prasert Machineries Thailand. There are three galvanizing lines with main line supplied by M/s. BERG, Germany. Composed of multinational workforce and managed by competent technical and managerial professionals, Al Jazeera has been seized with a vision to becoming one of the leading tubings suppliers in the world.

At Al Jazeera, production processes have been integrated with modern

quality controls like, e.g., online Eddy Current Testing facility, Universal Testing Machine, Hardness Machine and Inverted Metallurgical Microscope with CCD camera attachment etc.

Al Jazeera currently export its products to 25 different countries including USA, Canada, Australia, Germany and other European Union countries.

The company's **CEO, A. N Venkat** is an engineering graduate in Metallurgy from IIT- Roorkee, India, with additional management and additional financial qualification from Xavier School of Management (XLRI), Jamshedpur, India.

He has more than 25 years experience in the international steel

industry at various management levels across the globe, with a special focus on GCC, Middle East, and India. He started his career as a graduate engineer at Tata Steel, later moving to Arcelor Mittal where he last held the position of Managing Director – GCC & India Sales.

In his last engagement, he worked as Sales Vice President at Emirates Steel Company, Abu Dhabi, UAE. As a part of the executive management committee, he was instrumental in the growth of 1.5 million tonnes predominantly a re-rolling facility to a 3.5 million tonnes completely integrated steel facility.

His experience spans across geographies, markets, and product segments in the steel industry, which lends him a unique blend of product & market knowledge.

He has proven abilities in operations management, marketing, sales & commercial functions, with a proven track record of leading multi-cultural teams and bringing out record-breaking performances within a very short span of time.

Speaking to **Sanjay Singh, Associate Editor of Steelworld** he said that the company's performance was better than budget targets. Excerpts



A. N VENKAT



How was the performance of your company in the year 2016 and what prospects you see in the coming years ?

- The company's performance was better than budgeted targets, volume wise it was the best year for Jazeera steel. With continuous incremental construction and projects going on in GCC, we expect the demand to be steady and positive.

How do you see the Gulf market for your company products in view of competition from China and other countries ?

- While it is a fact that we face stiff competition from China, it is also true that we have different strengths as compared to mills exporting to our market – to name a few – Consistent quality, on time deliveries and strong relationship and trust built with our customers over the years. These strengths help us weather the competition.

Steel Industry in general has seen downturn in previous years in view of glut and over supply. What strategy did you put in place to be competitive ?

“ Rather than expansion we are looking to increase utilization and also as already mentioned move to niche product segments. ”

- I would not entirely agree with this, yes the industry has been plagued by overcapacity especially in certain countries, however, those countries are taking consistent measures to cut capacity and this is helping the market.

Having said that, we are focusing on providing service and quality at relevant price so that customers find value in dealing with us. Further we are also diversifying into niche products within the same product category, so that we target a segment of the market which is in demand but less crowded.

Al Jazeera Steel is a leading manufacturer of tubing products. Which are the major markets for your company and how much you exported during the last financial year?

- Our Main markets continue to be Oman & the rest of GCC. Export per se is not an imperative and is done to a select few markets and customers.

Generally how is the tube market faring worldwide and which country in your opinion holds more potential ?

- The tube market worldwide is pretty much in the same lines as the general steel industry. We are specially focused on the GCC & with a good pipe line of projects notwithstanding lower oil prices, our home market in Oman & the GCC hold the best promise for us.

What are the expansion plans lined up for the company in the near future ?

- Rather than expansion we are looking to increase utilization and also as already mentioned move to niche product segments.