

**FICCI-INSDAG Seminar on
'Steel – The Preferred Choice of Material for Infrastructure Construction'
18-19 February, 2011 - New Delhi**

Keynote Address by Hon'ble Minister of State for Steel (I/C)

- Shri Amit Mitra, Secretary General, FICCI ;
- Shri P.K. Mishra, Secretary, Ministry of Steel;
- Shri C.S. Verma, Chairman, SAIL;
- Shri Sushim Banerjee, D.G., INSDAG ;
- Other distinguished speakers on the Dais;
- Eminent persons from the Industry;
- My friends from Media and
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am pleased to be present here and address this august gathering since I took charge of the Steel Ministry. The focus of the seminar concerns a very important aspect of steel applications in the construction and infrastructure sectors.

I understand that the Conference is being attended by structural engineers, architects, actual users, logistic managers, economists and decision makers. This will certainly open up the idea on versatile and cost-economic uses of steel as the best material for the construction related applications, in the country.

Indian steel industry is standing at the threshold of a quantum jump in production, consumption, technological upgradation and innovativeness. The whole world is looking with awe and admiration to the sustained growth of steel consumption in the country at 8-9 percent every year against a world average of less than 4 percent. The growth of steel industry has moved in tandem with the healthy growth of the economy at nearly 9 percent during the past few years. Indian steel is poised for a double digit growth in the coming years, duly supported by growth in investment, employment and income in the country.

Currently, the per capita steel consumption in India is around 50 kilogram, as compared to more than 180 Kilogram of world average steel consumption. This shows clearly that, the steel demand in the country has a potential for much higher growth in the future. Construction industry, particularly the infrastructure sector, is one of the major consumers of steel in the country. Therefore, we need better quality of steel intensive design in construction.

Innovative applications of steel have already started penetrating into urban construction areas. We have been observing this phenomenon in the new airports, flyovers, metro railways and high rise buildings. But, penetration of steel in rural and common household application areas has not been much. More than two thirds of population of India live in rural areas and that is an untapped area where the steel application can be really enhanced. This will not only bring in increase of steel consumption in villages, but also it will help the masses in finding solution to most of their problems in a cost effective and sustainable manner.

The boom in transportation is a glaring example of increased usage of steel in rural sectors. Two wheelers have expanded their presence in a big way. Four wheelers, suitable for village roads are also being introduced for goods movement and passenger transportation. Auto rickshaws, bicycles have always been the common man's mode of transport and now they are seen in larger numbers. Tractors are gradually replacing the age-old technique of using bullocks for ploughing. This automation has not only shortened time, but also resulted in increased demand for steel.

Steel items have replaced many traditional items in the village construction sector. The Kuccha houses and thatched roofing are being replaced with galvanised sheets. Houses, which are sturdy, are also being built in hilly areas, with the help of steel structures and steel bar reinforcements.

The next area in the rural sector is the daily household items of use such as containers, utensils etc. which are bought for lifetime uses.

The increased use of steel in other areas is already known to the gathering. The beautifully crafted airports, the flyovers, foot over bridges, shopping malls, the high-rise commercial spaces, bridges bear testimony to the increasing use of steel in construction.

While we are taking a number of steps to increase the steel production capacity in the country, there is also a simultaneous need for delivering quality at reasonable price to the large number of consumers in the country. Steel must not only be available, it should also be affordable for the users. The steel producers, users and architects should work together to ensure that better quality and innovative steel items are made available in the future, which are at the forefront of world class technology.

I thank the organisers for organising this seminar on a different idea concerning steel applications. I would like to leave the future of Steel in the hands of decision makers, technocrats and economists and strongly believe that they would come out with new solutions to make India the hub of steel development centre of the world.

Thank you,