

SAIL INDIA

Greening steel-making

Company lists its green practices to counter damning NGO report

Parul Chhaparia

PERSPECTIVES of industries and non-government bodies often differ on environment protection norms. While NGOs insist on putting in place the most stringent environment safety standards, industries often find it difficult to comply with such norms.

Similarly, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), a non-government organisation, and public sector steel maker SAIL are unable to agree on what would be the right green norms for the steel industry.

Dismissing a CSE report that slammed the domestic steel sector for being one of the least environment-friendly industries, the government-owned Steel Au-

thority of India maintained that the green initiatives were one of the focus areas in the company's ₹72,000-crore expansion and modernisation plans. Moreover, in the older plants, several measures have been taken to mitigate their environmental impact.

was no monitoring mechanism in the country. Verma, though, not commenting directly on the report, said the protection and preservation of the environment was one of the priorities at every plant of the company.

“SAIL's corporate environmental policy emphasises conducting operations ‘in an environmentally responsible manner to comply with applicable regulations’ and strives to go beyond,” he said.

The steel major has taken various initiatives such as developing a green-belt, introducing smokeless coke ovens and green locomotives, and water conservation at its plants. Under its green-belt development & ecological restoration plans, the company has planted over 2.81



“With the latest technology and operational practices being incorporated in SAIL's ongoing expansion and modernisation programme, a substantial part of the environmental issues is being addressed. The company's technology plan lays stress on clean technology,” CS Verma, chairman, SAIL, said.

According to SAIL officials, equipment supply worth ₹5,000 crore ordered by the company are technologically advanced and environment-friendly.

The CSE report said the domestic steel industry was consuming 50% more energy and three times more water than their global counterparts. Most steel companies are not even meeting the pollution control norms, it said.

The report, based on the survey in 20 steel companies, found out that the steel sector's energy consumption at 6.6 giga-calories per tonne was 50% higher than global best practices. The CSE's director general Sunita Narain said that it pointed to the failure of the regulatory system as there

lakh trees around its plants and mines last year. A SAIL official said that over 12 lakh trees have been planted since 2007-08.

The company has also entered into an agreement with the department of bio-technology, Centre for Environment of Degraded Eco-system and Delhi University to restore the out areas. So far, it has restored 159.6 acres at Purnapani, 11.4 acres at Kalta and 27.8 acres at Barsua mines.

Similarly, at the Bokaro plant, SAIL installed two new smokeless coke ovens. The ovens were commissioned in June last year and February this year.

In order to conserve fossil fuel reserves, the company has also started blending biodiesel with locomotive fuel at the Bokaro plant. The SAIL official said that “the use of 10% of biodiesel in fuel has resulted in a 29% reduction in overall pollution emission by the locomotives.” The company is now looking at having similar initiatives at its Bhilai plant.

At Rourkela, the company has installed a system to suppress dusts generated by plant operations. “The effort is to be as eco-friendly as possible and it is not because it is mandatory. It also makes better business sense for the company to be more fuel efficient and go green,” a senior SAIL official said.