

ATH to Expedite Projects Globally

Karachi - 28 May, 2009: Al-Tuwairqi Holding (ATH), Saudi Arabia's largest private-sector steel maker, expects the Saudi Arabian government to lift the ban on exports of steel products in next 2 months. End of ban on exports would not only boost production activities of ATH in the Kingdom but also help expedite its ongoing projects globally including Tuwairqi Steel Mills Limited (TSML) in Pakistan; mainly its 2nd and 3rd phase.

These views were expressed by Tariq Barlas, Vice Chairman & CEO of ATH at World Recycling Convention & Exhibition held recently in Dubai. He said, "Last year in April the government imposed a ban on scrap metals and finished steel products because prices increased from US\$ 650 to US\$ 1,300. The government wanted to protect local consumers because the price of manufacturing steel is very low in Saudi Arabia."

He was of the view that Saudi Arabia will soon shift from being an importing country of metals to an exporting one. That is why the government wants to lift the ban. "Currently, negotiations for reviewing the ban are taking place on a very high level and hopefully it will be lifted within 2 months," he added.

While giving an outlook about the global steel industry he said, "As of the last quarter of 2008, projects valuing at almost US\$ 3 trillion were in the planning stage or under construction in the Gulf area. But with the credit crunch taking hold and the oil prices plunging, the last quarter of 2008 saw an unprecedented low. The brighter aspect is that markets now are responding positively. Due to various initiatives being announced and steps taken mostly by the G20 nations, the steel prices now are off the lows in the first quarter of 2009. Though in terms of volume, 2009 would not be a good year but it is definitely expected to pick up in 2010."