

BIR meets in Amsterdam

Deep concern gives way to



cautious optimism

The latest BIR Convention, staged in the Dutch capital of Amsterdam, enjoyed a somewhat lighter atmosphere than its two predecessors in Düsseldorf last autumn and Dubai this spring thanks to a general improvement in market conditions. But as reflected in the following series of articles covering all of the Convention's open sessions, the recycling industry's new-found optimism remains guarded.

The mood among traders at the Okura Hotel in Amsterdam was mixed, although there seemed to be a consensus that the worst is over and that the recycling industries are on the way back up - although it was widely acknowledged that the recovery is likely to be long and hard. 'We just have to forget about 2009 and look forward to next year,' mused one trader.

Among the major current issues, the weakness of the US dollar in relation to the Euro is currently working to the detriment of Europe's scrap traders and machinery/equipment manufacturers, with all of them struggling to compete against their North American counterparts.

Secondary raw materials are flowing more freely but prices remain highly volatile. 'I don't have the feeling that our end users are seriously re-stocking,' commented one trader. 'Many are just using the spot markets to purchase material for their short-term production needs. And let's face it, as long as the economy is not picking up, lower volumes of raw material are needed for production and so we will keep on suffering.'

Dutch home game

As it was a 'home game' for them, it should come as no surprise that the Dutch contingent in Amsterdam was the second largest at just over 100 - a figure bettered only by the 111 delegates from Germany.

As at the BIR 2009 Spring Convention in May, the large proportion of traders from India was particularly noticeable. Although some 30 had registered for the event, a far larger number was to be found in the lobby of the Okura

Hotel, ready to do business with anyone stepping out of the Convention rooms. Surveying this scene, a European delegate joked: 'It looks like the Indian Ocean down here.'

In contrast to the BIR Convention in Dubai, there were many more participants from China; approaching 30 had registered and a few more unregistered traders could also be seen in the Okura's lobby.

International Environment Council

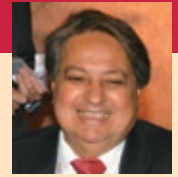
The European recycling industry must remain united as it nears the long-held goal of extricating its end-products - namely materials ready for melting or re-pulping - from waste legislation, delegates to the BIR's International Environment Council (IEC) meeting in Amsterdam were urged by its Chairman, Olivier François of Galloometal in Belgium.

It is crucial, he said, for the industry as a whole to back the development of criteria for establishing the 'end of waste' because these will bring harmonisation, legal certainty and a reduced administrative burden for the entire EU recycling industry, Mr François insisted. 'We really must keep this target in mind,' he declared. 'We need to be strong and we need to be strong together.'

Also at the IEC meeting, BIR's Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley highlighted the Basel Convention's Partnership for Action on Computing Equipment (PACE) which brings together personal computer manufacturers, refurbishers, recyclers, international organisations, academia, environmental groups and governments with a view to improving the management of used and end-of-life comput-

Ikbal Nathani's BIR joke

Indian Hell



A man dies and goes to Hell. On arrival, he finds that there is a different Hell for each country. He goes to the German Hell and asks: 'What do they do here?' He is told: 'First, they put you in an electric chair for an hour. Then they lay you on a bed of nails for another hour. Then the German devil comes in and beats you for the rest of the day.'

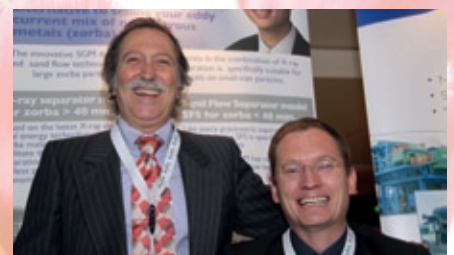
The man doesn't like the sound of this, so he moves on and checks out the American Hell, the Russian Hell and those for some other countries - only to find that they are all more or less the same as the German Hell.

Then he comes to the Indian Hell and finds that there is a long queue of people waiting to get in. Amazed, he asks: 'What do they do here?' And he is told: 'First, they put you in an electric chair for an hour. Then they lay you on a bed of nails for another hour. Then the Indian devil comes in and beats you for the rest of the day.' 'But that's exactly the same as in all the other Hells, so why are so many people waiting to get in here?' the man wonders.

He is told: 'Because the maintenance here is so bad that the electric chair does not work, someone has stolen all the nails from the bed and the Indian devil is a former government servant, so he just comes in, signs the attendance register and then goes to the canteen.'



Michael (left) and his father Julian Schwartz (middle) from I.R. Metals for Industry Ltd. in Israel are engaged in a conversation with BIR's International Trade Council Chairman Robert Voss.



Dr Guido De Santis (left) and Frank Gevelle in the booth of SGM Magnetics.



Three ISRI figureheads. From left: Commodities Director Bob Garino, Chair George Adams and SCRAP magazine Publisher/Editor Kent Kiser.



The cocktail bar in the hospitality area was sponsored by Dutch company Jewometal Stainless Processing.



During BIR's Welcome Reception, Rembrandt's famous painting 'Nightwatch' was recreated 'live' on stage.



BIR's Communication Director Elisabeth 'Marilyn Monroe' Christ.



BIR President Dominique Maguin was one of the characters who performed in the Nightwatch-recreation.



Rolf and Hannelore Willeke are copying the Rembrandt painting shown on the screen during the Welcome Reception.

ing equipment. Since recycling industry participation in PACE has been limited to date, he suggested more companies operating in this field should consider becoming involved in this important initiative.

International Trade Council

Reporting on an 'extremely busy' period for BIR's International Trade Council, its Chairman Robert Voss of UK-based Voss International confirmed a change in the rules affecting exporters of recyclables to China. With regard to its registration system for overseas suppliers, the country's General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) wants all new applicants to be certified to ISO 9001 or equivalent. However, it was emphasised in Amsterdam that this requirement is unlikely to apply to those companies looking simply to renew their registrations. A 'channel of communication' has been opened up with the credit insurance sector which could eventually lead to the development of an insurance policy tailored to the needs of the entire scrap industry, Mr Voss noted. And he also warned delegates about an Internet scam whereby fraudulent companies have been using the names of reputable firms to secure deposits for scrap which is never received. 'I know of three companies in China which have been caught out,' he told delegates.

Situation 'on ice'

Mr Voss also confirmed that some progress has been made in recent months with regard to India's onerous scrap import proposals. However, the situation remains unresolved and 'on ice', he told delegates. During the BIR Convention in Amsterdam, Ikbal Nathani - who is both President of the Nathani Group of Companies and Chairman of the recently-founded Metal Recycling Association of India (MRAI) - took time out to outline to Recycling International his organisation's stance on India's classification of all ferrous and non-ferrous scrap as 'hazardous'. 'In India, the Ministry of Environment & Forest is responsible for environmental affairs,' he explained. 'In September 2008, they issued a governmental notification whereby all grades of both ferrous and non-ferrous scrap were classified as "hazardous waste". In addition, only actual scrap users were allowed to import these scraps, not the traders. Users could get



permission to import only once they had filled out a transboundary form which calls for test reports, analysis, examinations and so on. Subsequently, India's scrap traders met with the Indian Minister of the Environment, Jairam Ramesh, and, as a result of these discussions, he gave instructions that it should also be allowed for traders to import metals.'

Businesses under threat

Annually, India imports nearly 3 million tonnes of ferrous scrap and 1.5 million tonnes of non-ferrous scrap; around 90% of this business is carried out through traders. Most of the imported scrap is sold to small smelters making parts such as door hinges. 'Because these smelters cannot import themselves,

Future BIR Conventions

2010

May 31-June 2

Istanbul

Turkey

Swissôtel The Bosphorus

October 25-26

Brussels

Belgium

Sheraton Brussels Hotel

2011

May/June

Singapore

(Tentative)

October 24-25

Munich

Germany

The Westin Hotel



In Amsterdam, there was a large number of traders from India. One European delegate joked: 'In the lobby, it looks like the Indian Ocean.'



A delegation from Japan. From left: Masahiro Nagata of Metal One, Jun Nakatsuji of Nakatsuji Ltd., Haruhiro Okada of the Japanese Iron & Steel Recycling Organisation JISRI, and Genkichi Ando of Seinan Corporation.



Outside the Okura hotel in Amsterdam, it was Smoker's Paradise.

their businesses would have to close if their supply stopped,' noted Mr Nathani.

India is a signatory to the Basel Convention whose Annex 9 classifies metals as non-hazardous. Mr Nathani pointed out: 'India has become the first country in the world to classify metals scrap as hazardous and, as a result, all other signatories will no longer be able to export metal scrap to India once our government reports this change of policy to the Basel Convention - something which, by the way, it still has not done.'

Although Mr Nathani is convinced that Indian officials have acted in good faith, he believes this notification was drafted by people 'who do not understand the importance of recycling for our economy and the environment'. And he added: 'The government should encourage recycling and imports of secondary raw materials rather than calling metals scrap hazardous.'

Unnecessary red tape

MRAI's Chairman underlined that recycling scrap compares favourably to using iron ore, coking coal and limestone which entails heavy carbon dioxide emissions. According to a BIR study, 67% of the energy is saved when using scrap compared to following the primary route - a finding MRAI has brought to the attention of the Indian authorities, he noted. The re-classification of scrap as hazardous cre-

ates unnecessary red tape and benefits other countries competing with India for raw materials, according to Mr Nathani. 'If India does not change this, US, European and Japanese exporters will sell their material to other countries and our recycling industry will be severely hit,' he warned.

Mr Nathani believes the Indian government should immediately conduct a study into whether scrap is hazardous or not - even though such analyses have already been carried out and are readily available. He insisted: 'They will come to the conclusion that this material is not hazardous and that it is wrong to impede imports of metals scrap.'

And he concluded: 'In November, we will meet again with the ministry and we hope we can convince them of our views.' □



BIR International Environment Council (IEC) Chairman, Olivier François of Galloometal in Belgium.



Ikbal Nathani, Chairman of the recently-founded Metal Recycling Association of India (MRAI): 'India's re-classification of scrap as hazardous benefits other countries.'