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CHEMICAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

DP/SRL/69/012

SRI LANKA

TERMINAL REPORT

Propared for the Government of Sri Lanka by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, executing agency for the United Nations Development Programme



United Nations Industrial Development Organisation

id.77-944

United Nations Development Programme

CHEMICAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT DP/SRL/69/012 SRI LANKA

Project findings and recommendations

Prepared for the Government of Sri Lanka by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, executing agency for the United Nations Development Programme

Based on the work of J. D. Adhia, expert in the development of basic chemical industries

United Nations Industrial Development Organization Vienna, 1977

Explanatory notes

References to dollars (\$) are to United States dollars, unless otherwise stated.

References to "tons" are to metric tons.

References to "gallons" are to Imperial gallons (4.545 litres).

PCC refers to the Paranthan Chemicals Corporation.

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ABSTRACT

The project "Chemical industry development" (DP/SRL/69/012) stems from the request, in 1969, of the Government of Sri Lanka to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for assistance in the modernization and expansion of its basic chemicals industry, which consisted primarily of the electrolysis plant of the Paranthan Chemicals Corporation (PCC). This plant is based on solar salt, of which Sri Lanka produced about 80,000 tons yearly. It produced, yearly, about 1,100 tons of caustic soda, simultaneously generating about 950 tons of chlorine gas.

As executing agency for this project, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) assigned an expert in the development of basic chemical industries to render assistance to PCC in improving its plant. In view of increasing demand, and since the production of PCC satisfied only about one third of the country's requirement of caustic soda, the expansion of the plant had been under active consideration. As the industry develops, it is considered that proper co-ordination between the related sectors of the chemical industry, such as the utilization of chlorine and the balancing of the production of soda ash will be of increasing importance. The present project was designed to pursue these aims.

The expert was to work in close collaboration with the industries concerned and to undertake the following duties:

Advise the Government on the improvement of co-ordination of the chemical industries

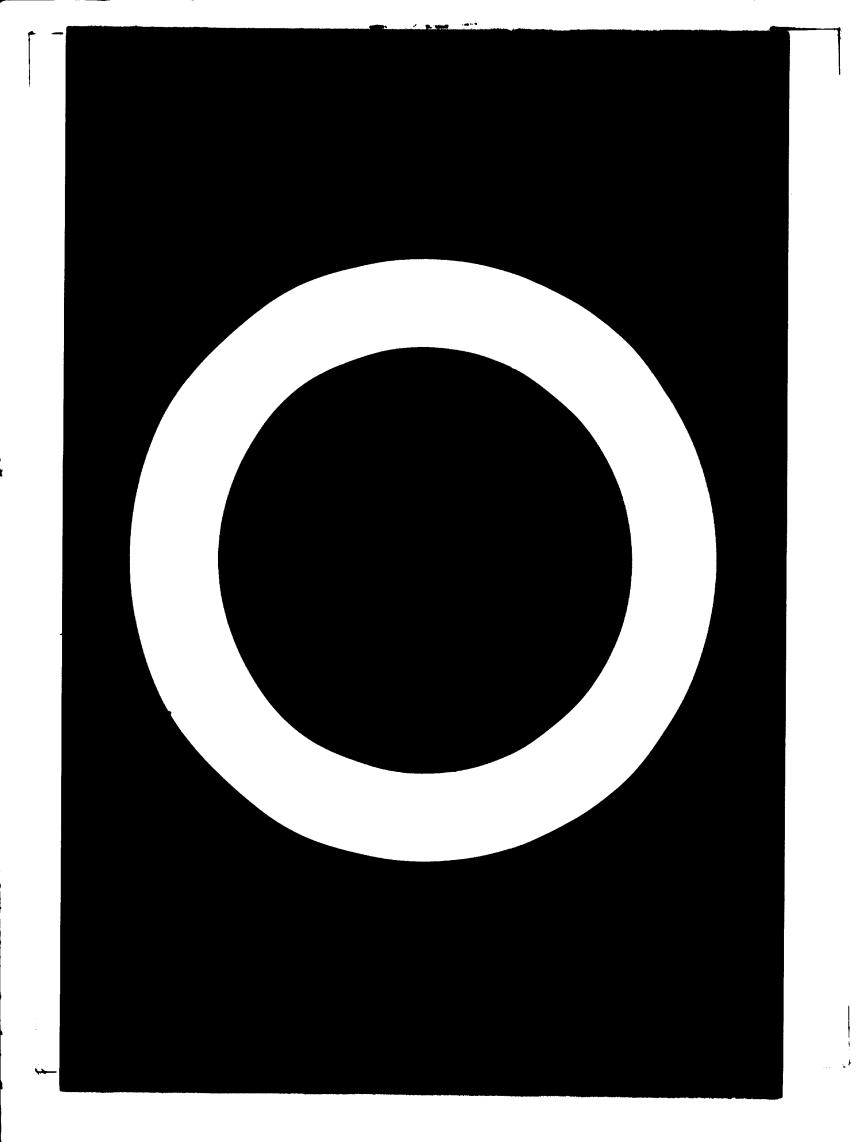
Assist the Government in making feasibility studies, from both the technical and economic standpoints of the proposed new complex for the manufacture of caustic soda, chlorine gas, pesticides (BHC, DDT), sulphuric acid, soda ash, ammonium chloride and the like

Make process evaluations of such manufactures

Recommend improvements of the existing chemical plants

Train, or recommend, training programmes for local personnel.

All of the objectives were achieved. This project was financed by total appropriations of \$84,409 by UNDP.



CONTENTS

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2.15

Chapter		Page
	INTRODUCTION	6
I.	PRESENT SITUATION OF THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY IN SRI LANKA	7
II.	RECOMMENDATIONS	11
	For the short term	11
	Research and development	12
	Second expansion of PCC	13
	-	

Annexes

I.	Publications, reports and other work of the expert related to the project	15
II.	Six-volume box file of notes submitted by the expert to the Chairman of PCC	18
III.	The caustic evaporator plant of the first expansion	25

INTRODUCTION

In 1969 the Government of Sri Lanka requested the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for assistance in the modernization and expansion of its basic chemicals industry, which consisted basically of the electrolysis plant of the Paranthen Chemicals Corporation (PCC). This plant is based on solar salt, of which Sri Lanka produced about 80,000 tons/year. From this raw material, PCC produced, yearly, about 1,100 tons of caustic soda, simultaneously generating about 950 tons of chlorine gas.

UNDP set up the project "Chemical industry development" (DP/SRL/69/012), with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) as executing agency. An expert in the development of basic chemicals industries was assigned to the project to assist PCC in improving its plant. This work was completed successfully. In view of the increasing demand for caustic soda and since the production of PCC satisfied only about one third of the requirements of Sri Lanka for caustic soda, it was considered that proper coordination between related sectors of the chemical industry, such as the utilization of chlorine and the balancing production of soda ash would be of increasing importance. The original project was therefore modified to suit this purpose. Over the duration of the project, it was supported by appropriations of \$84,409 by UNDP.

Under the terms of the amendment to the project, the expert was to work in close collaboration with the Industrial Board or other relevant high-level governmental organ and was required to undertake the following tasks:

Advise the Government on the improvement of co-ordination of the chemical industries

Assist the Government in performing feasibility studies from both the technical and economic standpoints, on the proposed new chemical complex for the manufacture of caustic soda, chlorine, pesticides (DDT and BHC), sulphuric acid, soda ash, ammonium chloride etc.

Make process evaluations of all these manufactures Recommend improvements of the existing chemical plants Train local personnel or recommend measures for such training.

- 6 -

I. PRESENT SITUATION OF THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY OF SRI LANKA

Most of the advice rendered by the expert to the Government of Sri Lanka (Ministry of Industries and Scientific Affairs) and also to PCC has been submitted through formal notes and reports. In order to avoid repetitive documentation, therefore, this terminal report does not summarize the numerous reports made during the past six years. A list of published works, major reports, special reports and committee reports is attached to this report as annex I. One set of the published work (annex I, A) has been submitted to the Chairman of PCC. One copy of each of the five major reports (annex I, B) is available both in the Colombo office and the Factory Library of PCC. Copies of special reports (annex I, C) are also with PCC.

In addition to the documentation listed in annex I, nearly 1,800 pages of short notes have been submitted to the Chairman of PCC. (A master copy of these notes had been collected for the expert's personal file.) At the suggestion of one of the Directors of the present Board of PCC, it was decided to leave with the corporation the six volumes of the box file containing these notes. In order to facilitate quick reference to these notes, a master index has been prepared and attached to this report as annex II. The present positions of various projects with which the expert was associated are given below.

PCC: first expansion

A 10-ton chlorine compressor, a chlorine washing column and the new chlorine liquefaction plants have been commissioned successfully. The caustic evaporator and the new switchgear are being erected and are expected to be commissioned during latter part of July 1977. The erection of the evaporator, although awarded to a well-known firm of engineers, and despite the inclusion in the contract of a penalty clause to ensure completion by March 15, was considerably delayed, and could not be commissioned before the departure of the expert. A special note (annex III) has been prepared on the commissioning of this plant. It is only here that the Stage I expansion project may give rise to unforeseen problems during the normal running of the existing plant.

PCC: second expansion

Technical discussions were held with the staff officers of PCC on the specifications for a rectifier for the third cell room, and decisions were

taken. These specifications were checked by Ceylon Electricity Board engineers, and the purchase procedure has been begun. The rest of the work has been outlined in the notes of the expert (Vol.V, pp.361 and 364; Vol.VI, pp. 5, 7, and 92). 1/ The salt-dissolving and brine-purification plant capacities will require closer examination.

Ultramarine blue: Pirisudu

These projects have been completed and are now in commercial production at the Negombo plant of the Ceramics Corporation.

Carbon black from coir waste

The project construction has been partially completed. After preliminary trials, the Sri Lanka Industrial Development Board will undertake the installation of auxilliary equipment.

Zinc oxide from waste metallic zinc

The pilot plant work has been successfully completed and is awaiting commercial exploitation. Details must be worked out for reclaiming metallic zinc from used dry cells.

The second caustic soda/PVC complex

A recent re-examination of the earlier studies made on this project has shown that the establishment of a second caustic soda project would not be economically viable without profitable utilization of chlorine.

A detailed study on the PVC project made in February 1972 had shown that the Kureha-Chiyoda process for manufacturing PVC through naphtha was the most economic; the calcium carbide route was found to be unfavourable. Since this study, the prices of naphtha in the international markets have undergone drastic changes. As a result, a re-examination of the project report by the expert has proved the calcium carbide route to be the more economical in the present context. The Credit Institute for Economic Development (KFW) of the Federal Republic of Germany is being commissioned to prepare a feasibility study of the project. The lime and limestone required for the production of calcium carbide must meet rigid specifications

1/ See annex II.

- 8 -

for both chemical content and physical properties, including the poorly defined term, burnability. The factory site will be determined, to some extent, by the location of a suitable bed of limestone.

The Nylon 6 project

It has been decided to finance this project with convertible foreign exchange. The project is being excouted.

Alginates

Preliminary project work has been completed. The National Textile Corporation has undertaken the commercial manufacture of the product.

Recovery of Epsom salts from solar salt bitterns

The project has been re-examined for technical and economic viability by the National Salt Corporation, and a decision has been taken for its implementation. The first recovery plant will be put up at Hambantota salterns in the south.

The ilmenite slag process

The large-scale trials in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics with Sri Lankan ilmenite and weera wood charcoal proved to be successful and their power consumption, yields and furnace capacity were found to be more favourable than had been expected from earlier laboratory-scale trials. Representatives of the Hungarian Metallurgical Trust have proposed using Government-level aid cum supplier's credits for a four-furnace project (45 to 50 thousand tons/ year slag production), including a marketing arrangement both for the slag and the cast iron produced. The proposal is under examination by the Government of Sri Lanka, and a decision is expected by the end of 1977. The views of the expert and his suggestions for further action were sent in a recent note to the Secretary of the Ministry of Industries and Scientific Affairs. The up-grading of ilmenite increases its value eightfold by volume and about fifteenfold by weight, so the project is basically very sound. Capital investment must be kept at the lowest possible levels as regards the turnover investment ratio and other considerations.

- 9 -

The Soda ash project

With the establishment of a sheet-glass factory at Dankotuwa and additional sodium silicate factories, the demand for soda ash may reach a level at which the establishment of a dual-process plant may become feasible. The main raw materials are salt, ammonia and carbon dioxide gas. The site for the dual-process plant must be adjacent to the fertilizer plant at Sapugaskande. KFW has been requested to prepare a feasibility study on this project. A background note on this industry is included as annex IV to the present report.

Iron oxide pigments from waste pickle liquor

This project is now in commercial production at the Ceylon Steel Corporation.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

For the short term

In order to make this terminal report a useful reference document, the suggestions for plant modifications which have yet to be carried cut are summarized below. When carried out, these suggestions will lead to further improvement in the capacity or efficiency of the plant.

1. General

Import or have locally fabricated, spare parts for the machinery required for the first and second expansion

To import the spare coils or winding wire for the AEG Rectifiertransformer

To organize an apprentice-training scheme

2. Brine purification

Replace all brine-transfer pumps with ones of larger capacity (110 gallons per minute (gpm)) Import a Sedipur Settling aid Resaturation of brine, preferably after pre-heating Order a compressed-air sparger for the neutralization tank Order a backwash arrangement for the sand filter Order an additional salt-dissolver for the second expansion

3. The cell house

Replace the asbestos paper by a deposited diaphragm. Deposition to be effected by application of vacuum Brine pre-heating to 60° C Control feed brine pH more effectively Dope new diaphragm cells with calcium ohloride regularly Lag the cells with polystyrene foam (Rigifcam)

4. Caustio evaporators (old evaporator for second expansion)

Improve caustic cooler operation (better salt removal arrangment, recirculation for better cooling etc.) Divert caustic cooler cooling water to hot well Build a steam-jet ejector Make arrangements for the collection of all caustic spillages Replace steel pipes by Monel metal ones (strong liquor system)

5. Chlorine gas: drying, compression etc.

Set up a chlorine cooler (glass tube/PVC) installation Use refrigerated brine in the titanium coil Install graphite pipes for the acid cooler for drying tower No. 2 Obtain an additional chlorine compressor or convect the present 5-ton machine to 10-ton capacity

6. Liquid chlorine

Obtain liquid level gauges for storage tanks

7. Table salt

Develop a salt dryer

8. Boiler house, power plant etc.

Develop a hydrogen burner for the boilers

Research and development

All of the following matters should be investigated:

1. Construction of a prototype miniature electrolytic cells for the study of:

Optimum current density Optimum brine-feed pH Effect of sulphate ion (SO_4^{-2}) on anode consumption Optimum concentration (grams per litre - gpl) of caustic soda (NaOH) in the cell effluent Investigations on chlorate content Improvement in electrical current efficiency Development of an optimal diaphragm material Optimization of the potassium chlorate (KClO₃) process Uses for waste sulphuric acid (copper sulphate (CuSO₄), zinc sulphate, iron-free alum, superphosphate etc.) Stabilizer for household bleach solution Recovery of sodium sulphate from evaporator salt Manufacture of graphite anodes from Sri Lankan graphite (liason with Sri Lanka University and others doing this work)

Treatment of graphite anodes with rubber-seed oil

Upgrading of brine sludge for use in toothpaste, cosmetios and as a rubber filler

Manufacture of zinc oxide (ZnO) by the French process

Construction of an ice plant

Manufacture of laboratory chemicals

Manufacture of calcium chloride (CaCl₂) and development of new applications for it

Design of a large-scale production plant for ferric ohloride (Fe_2Cl_3)

Second expansion of PCC

Listed below are important jobs and problems that are connected with the second expansion of PCC:

Setting target dates and preparing net-work analyses

Decision as to the ultimate plant capacity after the second expansion has been completed

Specifications for the rectifier

Preparation of design and layout for the third cell room

Changes in cell design and other modifications in the cell rooms

Preparation of a detailed list of materials to be imported

Integration of two evaporators so as to achieve maximum capacity and highest efficiencies

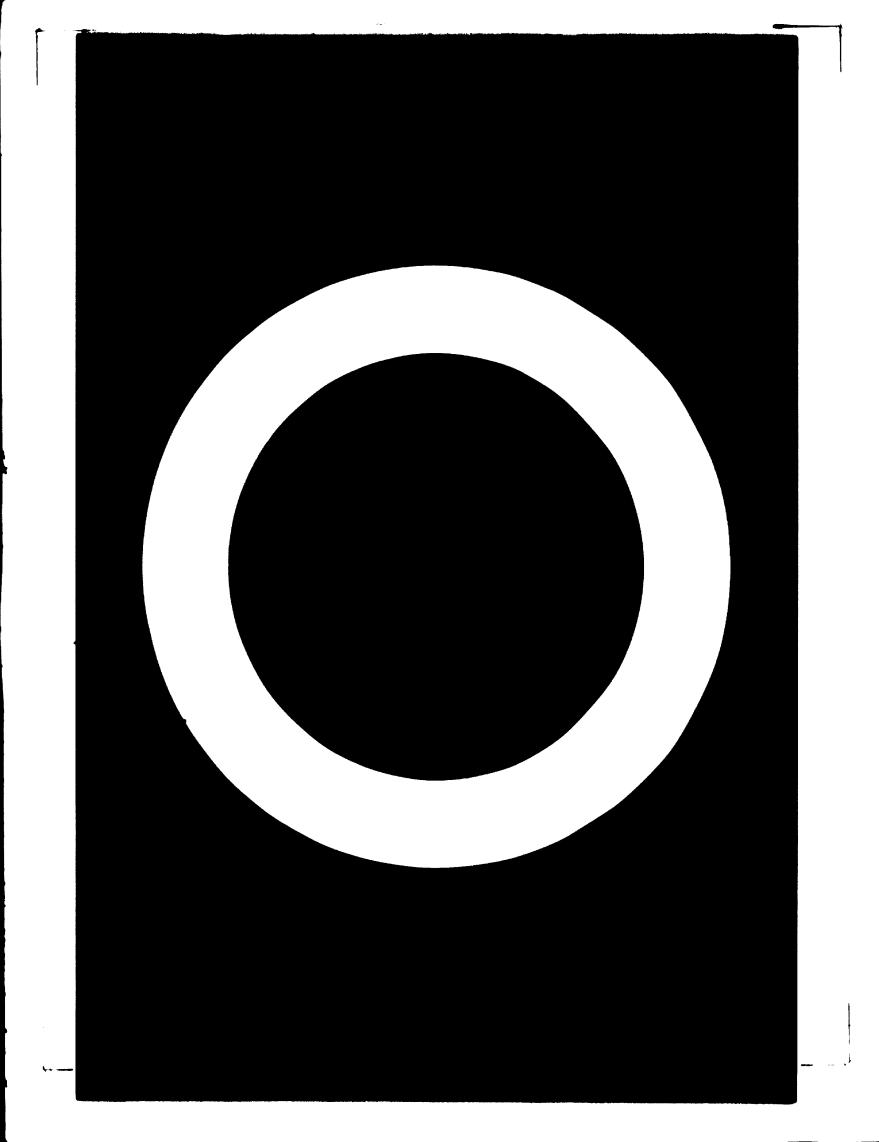
Integration of feed-water systems for the old and new boilers

Disposal of surplus chlorine

Transportation of large tonnages of liquid caustic soda, ferric chloride etc.

Development of the large-scale use of ferric chloride

Development of the use of hydrochloric acid for rubber coagulation.



Annex I

PUBLICATIONS, REPORTS AND OTHER WORK OF THE EXPERT²/ RELATED TO THE PROJECT

A. <u>Publications</u>

Some recent developments in the chlor-alkali industry. <u>Chemical Age</u> of India, June 1972.

Carbon black. <u>Chemical Age of India</u>, July 1974. Some problems of development of a basic chemical industry in Sri Lanka, <u>Technical Journal of the University of Perediniya</u>, 1974 The chlorine wash column. <u>Chemical Age of India</u>, October 1975. Caustic embrittlement. <u>Chemical Age of India</u>, April 1976. Titamium metal. <u>Iron and Steel Journal of India</u>, February 1976. Chlorine ton containers. <u>Chemical Age of India</u>, May 1976. Steam jet ejectors. <u>Chemical Age of India</u>, in press, 1977.

Sodium hypochlorite cell. Chemical Age of India, in press, 1977.

B. Major independent reports to PCC

Second caustic chlorine project: a preliminary report. May 1971. Feasibility study - PVC project, February 1972.

Production of gypsum in Sri Lanka. April 1972.

Report on the development of a basic chemical industry in Sri Lanka. November 1972.

Electrolytic caustic soda chlorine plant operator's manual. 1976.

C. Special independent reports to PCC

Manufacture of ultramarine blue. September 1972. "Pirisudu" products. February 1973. Processing of crude glycerine to refined product. February 1973.

a/ Jayout D. Adhia.

Recovery of glycerine (crude) from soap lyes (British Chemical Corp.). April 1973.

Hypochlorite bleach in place of hydrogen peroxide at Veyangoda Mills. April 1973.

Manufacture of alginates from Sri Lanka seaweed. April 1973. Iron oxide stains. May 1973. Recovery of Epsom salts from solar salt bitterns. September 1973. Methane from sewage. January 1974. Asian industrial survey for regional co-operation. January 1974. Steam jet ejectors. January 1975. Insulation for caustic evaporators. April 1975. Graphite anodes (manufacture from Sri Lanka graphite). May 1975. Salt-based industries in Sri Lanka. August 1975.

D. Committee reports on which the expert collaborated

The manufacture of synthetic fibres The manufacture of PVC Manufacture of Epsom salt from bitterns Panel on titanium Report on the manufacture of benzene hexachloride (BHC) The manufacture of calcium chloride Report on the chemical panel Coconut-shell distillation

E. Technical Committees on which the expert served.

Development of the basic chemical industry

Committee on chlorine bleach for the plant of National Textile Corp. at Veyangoda

b/ No formal reports were submitted, but some of the projects were executed.

a Mills.

Rayon

Essential oils and flavouring agents

High-grade lime

Gypsum and plaster of Paris

Soda ash

Zinc oxide from waste zinc

Alginates

Ultramarine blue

Replacement of expeller units at the Oils and Fats Corporation, Seeduwa

Safety matches: the creation of additional production capacities and ${\rm quality\ control}$

Manufacture of stains

Wood charcoal

Peanut butter

Titanium slag project

F. Special advice given to other corporations

Effluent disposal, National Textile Mills (Thulhiriya Mills)

Effluent treatment, National Paper Corporation (Embilipitiya Mills)

Chemical recovery and recausticization plant for the National Paper Corporation (Embilipitiya Mills)

Sludge (lime) burning plant of National Paper Corporation (Embilipitiya mills)

Specifications and selection of bids for chlorine tonners for National Paper Mills.

Annex II

SIX-VOLUME BOX FILE OF NOTES SUBMITTED BY THE EXPERT TO THE CHAIRMAN OF PCC

Volume and page Topic Acid cooler Administrative report Air dryer V 22 IV 62, 91 Alginates Ammonia compressor IV 341 Apatite I 44 Apprentice scheme Asbestos diaphragm Asian industrial survey IV 102 Bakelite Basic chemical industry Benzene from Refinery I 51 IV 163, 324 Boiler (packaged) I 121 Books for library V 304 Bostic sealing compound I 251, 273 Brine heating v 302, 354 Brine purification plant IV 110 Brine tanks - oonorete Calcium carbide Calcium chloride Capital budget I 125 Carbonation of caustic liquor **V** 28 Carbon black III 9 Cathodes Caustic soda concentration versus steam consumption ¥ 337 Caustic cooler VI 14 Caustic embrittlement

III 243; V 18 III 110; IV 16, 250 III 62, 217; IV 106, 108, 113; III 18, 208, 215, 272; VI 105 I 313, 339, 355; IV 257; V 147, 177, 200, 331; VI 112 IV 199, 214, 215 IV 1, 22, 24, 149, 316; V 148, 255 IV 97; VI 78 I 26, 68, 319, 334; II 1, 85 I 19; IV 288 II 1; IV 65 16

- 19 -

Topio

Volume and page

II 4; III 37, 187; IV 370; V 6, Caustic evaporator 92, 109, 145, 150; VI 126 I 119 Caustic soda recovery **VI** 131 Caustic soda bowser (tank truck) III 102, 104 Caustic soda flakes **V** 164 Caustic soda: Ion-exchange process Caustic soda liquid, small users **VI** 37 I 310, 320, 321; II 6, 11, 92; Caustic soda prices See also market intelligence III 2 ¥ 371 Caustic soda storage **II 46** Charcoal I 17; II 64; III 185; IV 7, 64 Chlorate in cell lye, glycerine etc. 104, 105, 121, 262 Chlorine: absorption tower I 124 I 255; II 13; III 8, 18, 39, 41 65, 66, 73, 87, 122, 182, 190, 193 996, 213, 271, 273; IV 150, 164, Compressor 280, 306; 7 17, 142. I 248; II 43; III 38, 88, 119, Cooling 248; IV 276 I 95, 253; II 156, 158, 165; III 7, 10, 67, 83; IV 243, 255, 275; Cylinders (tonners) v 275, 277, 290, 316, 344 III 117 Gas analysis III 204, 227 Production strategy III 118, 262; IV 234, 241; Storage tank V 267; V 199 **III 169** System cleaning I 114, 141, 144, 187, 213, 276, Uses - promotional activity 281; III 148; V 303 III 56, 171, 175, 186, 205, 223, Utilization (chlorine) 254, 263, 283; IV 4, 8; V 196 Wash column See under Liquid chlorine IV 222 Coconut-shell distillation III 120; IV 273 Compressed air **III 146** Condoms I 120; V 180, 270, 318, 329, 344 Containers, oarboys II 62, 68; III 84, 214, 252 Cooling tower I 93; III 25 Copper sulphate

I 13

Counterpart personnel

Topio

Volumen and page

III 68

Current efficiency in oaustic soda production

Customs records

DDT

Dechloratation

Development projects (R and D)

Diaphragm <u>See</u> Asbestos diaphragm

Diaphragm versus mercury cells

Discussions minutes (other personnel)

Distribution switchboard Drying towers Economics of production Efficiency targets Electrical engineer's visit to India Electrolytic cells

Electrolytic cells

Increasing to 60 (from 56) Operation at higher amperages

Exchange rates

Expansion: Stage I

Explosion: Stage II Explosions in Japanese chemical plants Explosives Feasibility criteria Ferric chloride I 128 I 109, 156, 171, 203, 302, 349 IV 132, 220; V 197, 351 I 318, 361; II 110; IV 233; V 297 I 5; IV 366 I 41, 42, 43, 46, 133, 143, 165, 167, 173, 177, 204, 205, 207, 211, 214, 221, 224, 276, 285, 289, 297 297, 305, 306, 347, 350, 349; II 8, 80; III 15 III 273

III 247, 251, 264; V 309 II 105 V 57 VI 114

II 67, 82, 115; III 27, 42, 82, 145, 274, 285; IV 353; V 14, 199, 366, 389; VI 80, 97

I 147 I 311

II 9, 77; III 238, 242; IV 30 I 9, 62, 208, 263, 266; II 89, 127, 143; III 42, 276, 278; IV 120, 151, 246, 271, 303; V 3, 10, 15, 90, 97, 116, 121, 122, 123, 227, 276, 293, 308, 332-3; VI 6 V 361, 364; VI 5, 7, 92 IV 242 III 91, 92, 140, 166 I 288 II 52, 53, 66, 100; III 209, 229, 249, 255; III 65; V 72 376, 383, 386; VI 70, 73

Topic	Volume and page
Ferrosilicon	IV 171
Fertilizer Corporation	I 133
Fertilizers	I 195
Fuel oil	I 50; IV 133
Glass-fibre lining of bowser	I 277; V 117
Glycerine recovery	IV 39
Gold, placer mining for	V 154
Graphite anodes	IV 341; V 77, 124, 131, 175, 177, 179
Gypsum	I 152
Gunniting	IV 272
Hot water return system	V 327, 334
Hydrochloric acid	I 48, 105, 120, 122, 324; II 148; III 14. 24, 44, 69, 70, 97, 211; V 140; VI 81
Hydrogen burner	VI 137
Hydrogen: explosive limits	IV 119
surplus from cells	IV 240
Hydrogen peroxide/chlorine bleach	I 126; IV 48, 154, 175, 252, 254
Hypochlorite bleach	I 141, 1 44, 1 87, 190, 212, 213; II 52, 81, 86, 111; III 170, 187, 199, 222; V 96, 152, 231, 25 7
Ice plant	VI 105
Import activities (PCC)	I 96, 97
Import statistics	I 283; II 42
Import substitution	I 126, 227; II 55
Incentive bonus	II 41
Indian chemicals production	I 199
Industrial development: Sri Lanka	V 194
Inflation, comparative	v 165, 27 8
Instrument repairs	III 141
Iron oxide pigments	IV 96, V 24, 232
Dr. Kane, visit of (from India)	I 41, 43
Lime, limestone	II 60, 69, 70, 114, 118, 1 26, 144; III 269; IV 221
Liquid bleach	VI 144

Topic Volume and page II 116, 122, 147; III 40, 43, 85, Liquid chlorine 86, 272, 281; IV 6, 338; V 4; VI 99 I 103; IV 170, 310; V 44, 225; Liquid injection wash column **VI 106, 125, 128** Machine shop at Kankesanturai (KKS) III 142 III 270 Magnesite I 65 Magnesium carbonate V 141, 178, 182; VI 1 Market intelligence (See also Caustic soda prices) I 15, 21, 36, 39, 72, 74, 99, 106, 107, 114, 116, 118, 127, 163, 165, 196, 203, 214, 217, 358; II 3 Market survey III 12 Materials management IV 244; V 138; VI 14 Materials of construction Methane from sewage IV 219, 342 Mettur (India) chlor-alkali plant **VI** 83 Moisture in "dry" chlorine and air III 124, 210, 250, 268, 272 I 312 Motor-generator set V 22 Net-work analysis IV 81 Nylon 6 I 333 Operation, improvements in v 149, 348, 369, 381, 400 Organization VI 36 Paint removers I 37 Petrochemicals I 146 pH values IV 339 Pharmaceuticals and drugs IV 14 Pirisudu Plant operation manual **VI 5**8 VI 65, 67, 69 Plant operation: model reports III 150 Plaster of Paris I 25, 48, 49, 68, 335, 336, 341, Potassium chlorate 344; III 209; IV 291 I 153; V 346 Potassium ohloride I 131, 154; III 159, 162 Power plant I 158, 279, 357; III 271; V 40 Power supply

- 22 -

Topio

Power tariff I 134, 194; II 79; III 181, 188, 192 Preventive maintenance **III 147** Production targets VI 4, 24, 26, 27 Progress review III 107 PVC **II 97; IV 369; VI** 78 Raw brine pumping VI 122 Rectifier specifications I 241, 244, 246; II 63; III 231; VI 43, 47, 129 Research lab; research projects III 76, 115 Resistance (electrolyte) to current VI 72 flow Rubber latex: coagulation by HC1 VI 81 Rubber lining III 180; IV 2, 128, 129, 238, 254; VI 9 Salt I 23, 272, 290 Salt dissolver VI 103 Salt dryer I 254; IV 100, 130 Salt, impure **V 35**8 Salt recovery I 155 Salt washing III, 111, 116, 216 Second Caustic Soda Project I 92, 112, 132, 137, 197; II 128; III 153, 241; IV 140, 232; V 65, 66; VI 31, 143, 148, 150, 157 Soap, effect of caustic soda V 362 prices on Soda ash II 50, 87; IV 317; V 26 Steam jet ejectors V 39, 349 Strength of mild steel pipes VI 126 Sulphuric acid I 249, 256, 352; III 28 Table salt I 67; II 117; III 123, 212, 249, 274; IV 277; V 353, 405; V 44; VI 145 Technical notes (miscellaneous) II 136, 139; III 101, 165, 237; IV 131

II 17; IV 174, 176, 224, 248, 259, 263, IV 290, 311, 360; V 95, 163, 260; VI 19

Technical statement (monthly)

- 1-

Volume and page

Topic

Volume and page

۱

[]

Tender specifications	I 136, 139; II 131; IV 72, 73
Titanium dioxide, ilmenite (includes slag process, ilmenite upgrading, rutile etc.)	I 71, 151, 162, 166, 169, 170, 176, 177, 179, 185, 186, 200, 221, 269, 270, 284, 305, 307, 348; II 14, 21, 88, 109, 125, 141, 145; III 36, 161, 194, 219; V 85; VI 162
Training	I 289
Transport problems	I 210; III 69; V 372, 375
Ultramarine blue	III 255, 260; IV 80, 98; V 27
UN fellowships	IV 51
Uses of chemicals	I 12; VI 38
Valves	V 74, 76, 169; VI 61
Visits to Paranthan Chemical Co. (Reports)	I 32, 34, 94, 257; III 200, 274; IV 26, 30, 116, 143, 168, 229, 358, 365; V 52, 53, 81, 87, 111, 132, 160, 172, 201, 264, 321, 340, 341, 360, 374, 382, 403; VI 21, 35, 40, 49, 51-54, 87, 102, 109, 117, 119, 121, 123, 130, 152
Visits to other industries (reports)	I 23, 35, 99, 130, 217, 252; II 60, 74, 121; V 204; VI 132
Wash column See Liquid injection, wash column	
Waste disposal, utilization	I 316, 317; III 19, 21, 51, 57
Water analysis	III 272
Water for Pa ranthan Chemicals Corp.	IV 293, 305, 319; V 8, 42, 114
Zinc dross	IV 245
Zinc sulphate	II 61

Annex III

THE CAUSTIC EVAPORATOR PLANT OF THE FIRST EXPANSION

When the present report was being prepared (July 1976) it seemed certain that the new caustic evaporator plant of the first expansion project would not be ready for operation before the departure of the expert. He therefore compiled the following observations in the hope that they would be of use in commissioning this equipment. Indeed, the final fiveweek period of the mission of the expert was devoted to this task. (As noted in the section PCC: "first expansion" of chapter I, the erection work for the evaporators and other plants connected with the first expansion of PCC was not ompleted on schedule, despite the fact that the task had been entrusted to a reputed engineering firm and that there was a penalty clause in the contract.)

The funds for the expansion of PCC were obtained through a loan granted by the Overseas Development Administration(ODA) of the United Kingdom. All plant and machinery had therefore to be purchased in Great Britain. Since the production of caustic soda there is dominated by a single firm (ICI Ltd), know-how for a special plant such as the caustic soda evaporator needed here is not widespread. Only two British firms made acceptable tenders for the evaporator, and both of them had their consultants in the United States of America.

During the execution of the order by the successful tenderer (Messrs. Robert Jenkins), a lack of co-ordination between the suppliers and their consultant in the United States was noticeable. Furthermore, the successful tenderer's knowledge of the operation of the plant appeared to be inadequate for putting it into commission. Consequently, it is likely that a number of difficulties in the operation of the plant will arise. The observations that follow were made with this situation in mind.

Evaporation and the handling of slurries

In this new plant, the basic principles involved and the general process of evaporation followed are the same as in the Escher Wyss evaporator, with which the operating personnel have considerable experience. The major difference is in the handling of the salt that crystallizes out during evaporation. The salt separation system in the new evaporator is of an improved type, but as it is radically different from the earlier system, it may give rise to certain problems during the commissioning of the Plant. All of the salt that crystallizes out in both effects is finally removed from second effect (weak liquor) as a slurry. The slurry must be as thick as possible so as to achieve the highest economics in evaporation and the recovery of caustic soda. The higher the concentration of solids in the slurry, the greater are its tendency to plug the pipes. Except for occasional experience with brine purification sludge, the processes used by PCC have not included the handling of slurries, and it may take some time to acquire the necessary experience. However, the optimization of the slurry concentration may be left for a later period, after other and more pressing problems have been solved.

The centrifure

The centrifuge in the new evaporator plant is of a continuous type. Once the operation has been mastered, it can give excellent results in dewatering the salt. The thickness of the cake and the stroke of the pusher can be varied, and working at optimum conditions could mean both a low caustic soda (NaOH) content of the cake and decreased use of wash water. Control of cake thickness increases the recovery of NaOH, and control of the pusher stroke reduces the steam consumption for evaporation. The best adjustments of these two factors would differ according to the type of salt crystals (coarse or fine). Great attention should be paid to the optimization of centrifuge operation in order to get the best results. The maintainance of this centrifuge also will require special attention particularly at general manager level.

Crystallization of the salt

The great advantage of the new evaporator is that it can achieve proper crystallization of the salt. For this purpose, however, it must be operated continuously and, once equilibrium has been reached, the concentration changes in the respective effects should be negligible.

Dechloratation

The dechloratation unit should be commissioned as early as possible so as to improve the quality of the finished product. The optimum quantity of sodium sulphite (Na_2SO_3) required will have to be determined at plant-scale operation. Possibly, about a 20% excess (over stoichiometric) will be required in order to remove 90 to 95% of the chlorate in the cell liquor. The temperature (and corresponding pressure) should be maintained at 190° to 200° C.

The barometric lag

The tank provided for the barometric leg may require some modifications. They have been discussed with the civil engineer and others.

The ejector

The ejector has been already operated at the old evaporator, and there will be no problem of getting proper vacuum in the new one. Working at the highest vacuum (690 mm Hg) will give the highest heat economy and high capacity for the evaporator. Corrosion will also be kept to a minimum.

Maintenance of capacity

The capacity of the new evaporator is much higher per unit of heating surface than the Escher Wyss evaporator. This results primarily from the forced circulation of the liquor through the heat exchangers. In order to maintain the evaporator capacity, the pumps will have to be maintained at top capacity and efficiency.

Spare parts

Sufficient supplies of spare parts will have to be obtained (locally where possible, imported when necessary) to keep the centrifuge, the oirculation pumps and other equipment in good working condition.

Steam consumption

The guaranteed steam consumption is rather high. Attempts should be made to achieve a much lower value.

Plant modifications

Whenever there are difficulties in the commissioning of a new plant, there is a temptation to effect modifications to achieve quick solutions to the initial difficulties. Such modifications often work, although the plant would have operated better and more efficiently without them in the long run.

- 27 -

It is necessary to exercise due restraint in carrying out expensive and timeconsuming changes in plant design or process. For the same reasons, it is advisable to return to the original plant design and mode of operation even if hasty modifications have apparently solved the operational problems. The mild steel liquor-circulating pipes in the first effect may develop leaks at the welded joints owing to brittleness caused by caustic soda. It would be best to replace these joints with nickel pipes after discovery of the first leakage.





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