

ber relationship with the ECM. If Nigeria and these countries do succeed in their efforts, India's trade with them will suffer. This possibility adds further urgency to India's own negotiations with the ECM. Since the collapse of Britain's EEC entry negotiations, India has submitted five notes requesting the EEC to consider her specific problems. Now at last there is some hope that such attention may be forthcoming. However, though the EEC Commission seems to have been impressed by India's problems and the proposals India has made to tackle them, there are indications that it would like to delay action till some global solution for the developing countries as a group can be devised.

### Dastur Restored?

A Correspondent writes:

THE Union Cabinet, on the recommendation of the Cabinet Secretary who was asked to look into the matter, has decided that Dastur and Co will be "associated" with the construction of the Bokaro steel plant as far as possible and that it would remain a private firm without Government participation. The precise extent and terms of association have not been spelt out but Dastur might be offered such of the engineering and designing work as would not require Soviet expertise. This, if interpreted in the right spirit, is what should have been made explicit at the time of signing the agreement with USSR. There was no question ever of Dastur designing the equipment to be supplied from abroad because it is always the supplier who undertakes the design and supply of equipment and the responsibility for its performance. The buyer chooses his own consultants to advise him and co-ordinate the project, which in the case of Bokaro involves a fairly large amount of work since 35 per cent of the equipment, apart from civil construction and procurement, would be domestic. Surely, it was not the Steel Minister's intention that the domestic part of the construction should also be handled by Soviet experts? What is required now is not: just a vague association of Dastur with Bokaro but a clear spelling out of its responsibilities as Government consultants.

Part of the damage has already been done since Dastur has retrenched about 400 of its 900 engineers—and many of the rest have accepted cuts of up to 75 per cent in their emoluments which is a tribute to the team spirit that has been built up in this firm. But it has

the Durgapur alloy and steel plant to its credit and also a contract for a steel mill in Pakistan. The dangers to which Dastur has been exposed bring out the difficulties of a single major consultancy firm which has to maintain a large staff on its payroll. In other countries, consultancy firms enjoy the advantage of division of labour through farming out sub-contracts and casual employment of specialised personnel. This activity has hardly developed here, largely because foreign collaborators are given or take turn-key jobs, not all of which have turned out to be satisfactory, to put it in mild terms. Dastur and the Designs Organisation of Hindustan Steel are the swallows which definitely do not make the summer. Now that Dastur has been restored to its rightful place (so one hopes), Government and private entrepreneurs must look about to encourage promising consultancy and design teams in or her industries.

### New Thinking on Corruption

SOME recent developments, if pursued, hold out hope that something may yet be done to fight corruption both at the political and administrative levels. The current *impasse*, especially with regard to political corruption, cannot be allowed to continue. A variety of ad hoc expedients have been devised in the past to look into cases of corruption at the ministerial level. This was unavoidable in the absence of an independent high-powered machinery to look into them. It was, therefore, gratifying to hear the Home Minister tell the last session of Parliament that: the Government's experience of handling the corruption charges against the Orissa leaders, Biju Patnaik and Biren Mitra, "called for rethinking" about the procedure for enquiring into allegations of corruption against political leaders. While Nanda maintained that in the Orissa affair no independent body could have come to a conclusion different from that of the Cabinet Sub-Committee, he conceded that the Sub-Committee could not be considered an independent agency. Hence, according to him, the Prime Minister was thinking in terms of a new approach.

The Home Minister's statement gave a fillip to the demand for an ombudsman which has found support among leading jurists and men in public life. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court has generally welcom-

ed the idea as has the former Attorney General, M C Setalvad. The Committee on Administrative Reforms appointed by the Rajasthan Government has recommended an ombudsman for the State. The subject has also come up in Parliament more than once. During the last session, the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Jaisukhlal Hathi, announced that a consultative group of Members of Parliament drawn from all parties would consider the setting up of a suitable machinery for redressal of public grievances. This was in the course of the debate on a non official resolution calling for the setting up of an ombudsman. Hathi reverted to this subject on Wednesday this week to disclose that the report of the Parliamentary study group on ombudsman would be ready in about two months.

With regard to corruption at the administrative level, the Central Vigilance Commission and its counterparts in many States have completed a year of quiet existence. Nittoor Srinivas Rau, the Central Vigilance Commissioner, revealed at the end of a three-day Conference of Vigilance Commissioners at Bangalore last week that neither at the Centre nor in the States had there been a single case where the advice of the Vigilance Commission had been rejected by the Governments. All the same, he pressed for an independent and statutory basis for the Commissions. As he put it: "To assist the Government in the maintenance of discipline of services, it is essential to establish proper conventions and traditions which, while enabling the commissions to function with independence and detachment, will ensure harmony and understanding between the Commissions and the administrative machinery and also help strengthen public opinion in the vigilance organisation all over the country". This advice, based on a year's experience of handling corruption cases, cannot be lightly brushed aside. If it is conceded, a very important step will have been taken in the fight against corruption.

### Local Finances

IN a developing economy with decentralisation of power, local bodies must necessarily shoulder more and more responsibility. On how adequately such bodies in India are equipped to perform their functions, we have had hitherto, very little in-