



Government Support is Essential for the Growth of Copper Industry

- Dr. D. De Sarkar
Chief Executive Officer
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Dr. D. De Sarkar graduated in Metallurgical Engineering in 1976 and obtained Ph. D. in Metallurgy in 1989. He did Diploma in Management in 1992. He started his career with Indian Copper Development Centre in 1976 as Metallurgist and was subsequently elevated to the position of Technical Manager in 1978. He has taken over as Chief Executive Officer of ICDC from 2005.

His areas of special interest include melting, casting, rolling, extrusion and drawing of copper and copper alloys, development of newer alloys and market development for copper base products. He is also actively involved in market research activities. He has authored over 50 technical papers, and made presentations in several national and international Seminars / symposia.

Dr. De Sarkar is a Member of various committees formed by Ministry of Coal & Mines, Govt. of India; TIFAC, etc., on issues related to 5 Year Plans, recycling of secondary copper, Indian copper market assessment, etc.

Dr. De Sarkar has been an active member of the Copper & Copper Alloy

Sectional Committee MTD:8 of Bureau of Indian Standards for over 2 decades and is the Chairman of this Committee since 2006. He is "Life Fellow" of The Indian Institute of Metals.

He is a Member of the FICCI Non-Ferrous Metals Committee from 2016.

Speaking to **Metalworld**, Dr. D. De Sarkar talks about the present and future status of the copper Industry in India and Globally.

Excerpts

What is the present status of copper industry in global as well as national market ?

Global mining capacity per annum is around 23.5 million tonnes and refined copper production capacity is 27 million tonnes. As per ICSG (International Copper Study Group) data, during 2016 copper mine production was 20.2 million tonnes and the corresponding figure for world refined copper production is 23.3 million tonnes including about 16.6% by secondary refining route. Global refined copper usage was 23.5 million tonnes. According to a recent survey report, copper is currently in supply deficit which is likely to continue for some time.

As for Indian situation is concerned, present combined capacity of Birla Copper (Aditya Birla Group), Sterlite Copper (Vedanta) and Hindustan Copper Ltd. is 999,500 tpy for refined copper production. This includes 50,000 tpy capacity of HCL's Gujarat Copper Project. Indian production was 7,96,600 tonnes in 2016-17. Another 4,00,000 tpy capacity is being added by Sterlite Copper. The capacity will increase to a much higher level if the proposed plant of Adani Group comes up.

However, domestic availability of raw material being limited, - almost 95% is sourced from outside in concentrate form. M/s. Hindustan Copper Ltd. are the only vertically integrated company having 3.2 million tonne per annum mining capacity. They are, of course, increasing their mining capacity to 12 million tonnes.

What are the issues facing the industry and what steps are you taking to rectify the same ?

As for downstream semis industry is concerned, a perennial issue particularly for rolled products, alloy wire, etc. even for castings is low volume order lot with diversified specification in terms of

dimension as also material chemistry and properties. Since manufacturers have to supply almost tailor made products – they become uneconomic in comparison to overseas bulk manufacturers.

Of late industry has started facing additional problem due to inverted duty structure. Negative effect of import under FTA has been badly felt by many industries.

Another important issue making the industry worried as signing of RCEP.

It is heartening to know that Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, will be conducting a study on the impact of import from China. Copper products need to be included in the study.

In terms of the technological advancement are the Indian copper manufacturer keeping abreast with latest developments or in your opinion more needs to be done ?

As for refined copper production – the Indian manufacturers are operating with modern technologies and implementing further improvement wherever necessary.

Many downstream industries are equipped with updated facilities like D.C. Casting, Continuous Casting, Cast & Roll technology, pilger mill, continuous annealing, strand pickling, etc. Of course there is scope for many industries to upgrade their manufacturing facilities.

To be competitive in the global competitive market, Indian industry should be quality and cost conscious. To achieve the objective – it is must : -

- not to compromise with input material quality
- increase yield
- reduce energy consumption
- reduce wastage
- need based technology up gradation

What are the future plans of ICDC ?

While ICDC will continue its basic services viz., information dissemination, technical & techno-commercial assistance, market research, focused seminar, standardization, etc., it has planned to launch several new activities from 2017 -18 – which include

- Making ICDC a common platform



“ According to a recent survey report, copper is currently in supply deficit which is likely to continue for some time. ”

for all the stake holders of copper industry to discuss issues of common interest

- Identifying and keeping a pool of experts (Indian and overseas) in the network of ICDC to provide improved services to the industry
- Closer liaison with regulatory authorities for the benefit of copper industry
- Closer interaction with academic institutes to take positive findings of lab scale fundamental research to pilot plant level in industry and ultimately to commercial production level

What policy level support do you expect from Government of India ?

Government should understand the genuine concern of the Indian copper

industry. Suitable changes in policy will definitely help Indian copper industry to grow, and meet not only the domestic demand, but semis export in bigger scale can be explored. Policy makers’ support is essential for the growth of copper industry and also sustaining the development.

How do you see the growth potential of copper in the coming years and according to you, which are the emerging applications for copper & In your opinion what is the future of Indian Copper Industry ?

Since per capita copper consumption is still very low in comparison to developed economics and global average, - there is substantial demand growth opportunity for copper products in India.

While electrical sector will continue to be the largest user segment - substantial demand growth is expected for applications in Railways, AC&R industry, etc.

The demand will go further with introduction of e-vehicle, desalination, medical gas copper pipe line as also potential newer applications like antimicrobial property based applications in hospitals; etc.

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