

Metalworld

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Editorial Desk

Dear Readers,

Undoubtedly, Asian metals industry is a big hope and the growth engine for the global steel sector and specifically Chinese and Indian one.

Though this is true, the problems in Indian metals industry can not be neglected as they are now affecting the pace as well as the prospects. As mentioned many times in this column, problems in land acquisition and environmental clearances have almost halted the progress of Greenfield expansion projects. Brownfield expansion projects are comparatively going on well and these will surely take the industry further to some extent. But as everybody knows, there is a limit to this expansion mode and soon saturation may be reached. Experts feel that this stage may be reached by 2015-16 but the journey further will have to be paved by Greenfield expansions.

If we look at the user industries, auto, infrastructure, engineering, all are progressing quite well. Their appetite for metals is going to increase every year and if it is not satisfied by the domestic producers, they will have to opt for imports. Analysts fear that India can be a net long term importer post 2015-16 if the domestic capacity does not grow as projected.

Another important point is scarcity of technically qualified manpower. Even today, getting a qualified and experienced metallurgist is not easy. If India wants to escalate its metals production, where from the metallurgists and the other technical manpower will come? Not many engineering colleges have metallurgy stream as they go for popular streams like IT, computer, electronics etc. which are definitely more paying as on today. Even the present population of consulting and contracting companies is not enough to take the responsibility of such huge projected expansion. In liberalized economic model, government does not have a regulatory role but providing industry infrastructure in terms of technical manpower can be a prime task of them. We welcome union budget proposals such as huge fund allotment for infrastructure, reducing import duty on beneficiation and pelletization equipment while raising import duty on finished items etc. but they will take care of only the demand side.

What about the much awaited 'Mining Policy'? Where are the norms about land acquisition? How can we expect that an entrepreneur should put huge amount in such projects where government policy is not clear?

D. A. Chandekar