

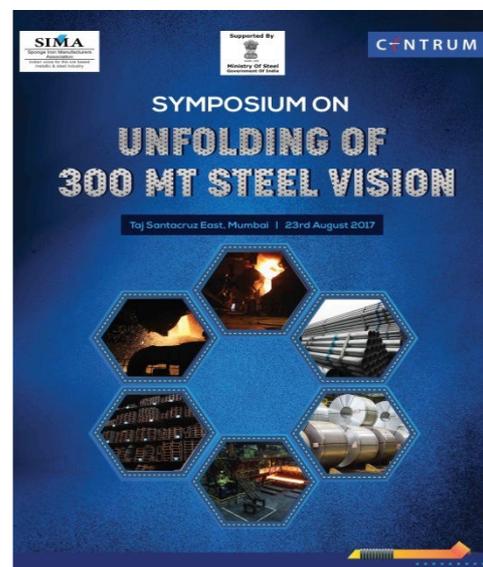
Symposium on National Steel Policy – Unfolding of 300 MT steel vision – Key Takeaways

We hosted the first ever symposium on the recently announced “National Steel Policy 2017” which had several eminent leaders from the Steel Ministry as well as the steel, mining & banking industry as key speakers. The symposium involved panel discussions with various stakeholders and a detailed presentation from the Steel Secretary, Dr. Aruna Sharma. The symposium focused on the preparedness of the industry and the government to deal effectively with the cyclicity of the steel industry and create a platform for further investment and growth in light of the ambitious 300 MTPA capacity goal by FY31.

- **Steel Ministry – several policy actions under work, confident of MSME potential:** Optimism on demand revival and sharp pick-up in per capita consumption of steel going ahead was highlighted and a strong assertion was made by the Ministry that the MSME sector (<0.5 mtpa capacity and <Rs20bn investment) is expected to play a significant role in the 300 MTPA vision on account of its low capex requirement (~Rs20bn per MT), low switching cost and better quality with optimised inputs. The MSME sector has little to no NPAs as an added advantage. Apart from implementing duty protection measures, a slew of other policy measures are being worked upon, these include: i) coking coal disaggregation (washeries) and making it available at 13 percent ash to the steel industry, ii) reclassification of iron ore/pellets at par with coal to reduce logistics cost, iii) suitable modifications in MMDR act to make the iron ore mine auction in 2020 predictable and effective, iv) increase natural gas availability to the steel industry to reduce reliance of BFs on coking coal, v) Reduction in power rates for steel making already started with the states of Punjab and Chhattisgarh, and vi) discussion with railways to offer volume based discounts and consider reducing the busy season timeframe from 9 months currently. There was strong indications that best efforts are being made to bring down the duties to NIL on key RM like coal.
- **Steel producers – NSP goal achievable, need for faster clearances and operational improvements:** The goal of 300 MTPA capacity by FY31 is achievable and the industry is well on track to meet the FY20 goal of 160 MT. Huge land availability in several existing big plants would ensure substantial brownfield capacity additions over the next 10 years and limit the need for big ticket greenfield projects. The panel had a consensus view in terms of the need for i) optimising logistics cost which is presently very high for the industry, ii) increasing investments in R&D, and iii) improving operational efficiency through higher blast furnace productivity, reducing specific consumption and improving quality of locally available raw materials.
- **Banking Institutions - looking for more accountability and equity from steelmakers:** Main factors impacting credit to the sector are a) steel players’ inability to modernize and b) non-transparency of data by the corporates that makes banks wary of lending to the space. It was clearly indicated that direct rate reductions for the sector can’t be provided given the cost of funds for banks and alternate mechanisms need to be thought of like PSL or infrastructure status for the sector to reduce borrowing costs. Other requisites for availing better & faster credit include, a) all project related approvals, b) land issues sorted in terms of ownership, and c) promoters investing equity in a timely and appropriate manner.
- **Mining & logistic companies – Need for better collaboration with steel industry and improved logistics:** Miners stressed upon the need for better collaboration between the mining & steel industry which are often seen to be at loggerheads over supply and pricing issues. Focus on new age scientific mining and reducing logistics cost was seen as the need of the hour for the industry. Developing a system of quarterly/long term contracts for iron ore was stressed upon. From Railways support for the steel industry, reduction in freight rates in the near term was ruled out but investments in capacity creation would improve the logistics for the steel industry and optimise the turnaround time. Railways would be equipped in time to handle the needs of 300 MT capacity of the steel industry.

Key Speakers for the event

1. **Sh. Vishnu Deo Sai**
Hon'ble Minister of State for Steel
2. **Dr. Aruna Sharma**
Secretary, Ministry of Steel
3. **Sh. Syedain Abbasi**
Jt. Secretary, Ministry of Steel
4. **Sh. Saraswati Prasad**
Addtl. Secretary & Financial advisor, Ministry of Steel
5. **Ms. Arundhati Bhattacharya**
Chairman, SBI
6. **Mr. T.V Narendran**
MD, Tata Steel
7. **Mr. Seshagiri Rao**
Jt. MD & Group CFO, JSW Steel
8. **Mr. B.K Goenka**
Chairman, Welspun Group
9. **Mr. Tuhin Mukherjee**
MD, Essel Mining
10. **Mr. T R K Rao**
Director-Commercial, NMDC
11. **Mr. M.V Subbarao**
CMD, KIOCL
12. **Mr. Prabhas Dansana**
ED - TTS, Railway Board
13. **Mr. D.P Deshpande**
Chairman, SIMA
14. **Mr. Deependra Kashiva**
ED, SIMA



Inaugural Session - Ministry's Vision for Steel Industry



Sh. Vishnu Deo Sai
Minister of State for Steel



Dr. Aruna Sharma
Secretary, Ministry of Steel

Presentation - Dr. Aruna Sharma, Secretary, Ministry of Steel

Keynote Address - Sh. Vishnu Deo Sai, Minister of State for Steel

Session Youtube link - <https://youtu.be/pBfz9GBbj0>

Key takeaways from the presentation & discussion:-

Goal of NSP 2017 and key role of MSME units in capacity creation

- The per capita consumption of steel is beginning to accelerate and would grow strongly going ahead (50kgs to 60kgs took almost 10 years but 60kgs to 64kgs has happened in the last two years).
- Erstwhile "Secondary Steel" classification has been removed and replaced with "MSME for steel industry". MSME units are identified with investments of \leq Rs2000cr and turnover of \leq Rs1000cr and capacity of \leq 0.5 mtpa.
- *The MSME sector is expected to play a significant role in the 300 MTPA vision on account of low capex requirement (~Rs20bn per MT as per MoS), low switching cost and better quality with optimised inputs. The MSME sector has little to no NPAs as an added advantage and could add ~140 mtpa capacity at a capex of Rs2.8 lakh crore by FY31.*
- Government will take steps to increase R&D efforts in the sector. Joint venture routes will also be encouraged.
- Ministry expects increase in FDI in the sector given the favourable policy environment, visibility of procuring raw material through transparent auctions and faster approvals.
- Ministry also expects steel to be the frontrunner in resolution under NCLT as well as in cases where debt is $<$ Rs50bn. Post resolutions which is expected to accelerate in the next 6-12 months, there could be higher capacity utilisation followed by capacity expansion at many of these assets.

Key Policy measures under works

- While the policy measures around imposition of safeguard and anti-dumping duties are well known and talked about, *the Ministry has been working on a slew of other policy measures, the results of which are in the pipeline.* These measures are a) coking coal disaggregation (washeries) and making it available at 13 percent ash to the steel industry, b) advocacy for right of way along the railway lines to slurry pipeline for iron ore fines, c) reclassification of iron ore/pellets at par with coal to reduce logistics cost to the tune of Rs8bn annually, d) suitable modifications in MMDR act to make the iron ore mine auction in 2020 predictable and effective, e) increase natural gas availability to the steel industry on affordable & assured basis to reduce reliance of BFs on coking coal, f) Reduction in power rates for steel making already started with the states of Punjab (Rs5/unit supply started) and Chhattisgarh, g) railways to offer volume based discounts and consider reducing the busy season timeframe from currently 9 months.
- *The ministry is focused on bringing down the duties on various inputs to NIL. Special focus is on reducing duties (2.5% currently) and providing a clean energy cess (Rs400/t currently) on coking & thermal coal.*
- A special committee of secretaries has been formed to deliberate on sustainable iron ore pricing formula and the outcome on the same is likely by Oct'2017.
- GST implementation is a big plus for the sector as rate is 5% on inputs and 18% on finished goods. Reduced transportation time and better set-off mechanism are the main benefits of GST.

Debt stress in the sector and need for lower interest rates for effective revival

- Steel sector is grappling with high leverage with total exposure of Rs4.1 lakh crore and 52% of debt with companies having debt/EBITDA of $>$ 12x and remaining stressed even after the recent steel price surge. The exposure of flat:longs is 52%/48%.
- *On the other hand, with a debt equity ratio of 1:1, total NPAs in small scale steel plants are less than 10% of the Bank's exposure.*
- *Strong focus needs to be given on reducing the financing cost for the steel sector from current 9-10% range to 6-7% range so that industry can be sustainable with long term average. EBITDA margins of 17-18%*

Steel Producers Session – Capacity creators geared up for the challenge?



Mr. Syedain Abbasi

Jt. Secretary, Ministry of Steel



Mr. T.V Narendran

MD, Tata Steel



Mr. Seshagiri Rao

Jt. MD & Group CFO, JSW Steel



Mr. B.K Goenka

Chairman, Welspun Group



Mr. Mr. D.P Deshpande

Chairman, SIMA



Mr. Deependra Kashiva

ED, SIMA

Panel – Mr. T.V Narendran (MD, Tata Steel), Mr. Seshagiri Rao (Jt. MD & Group CFO, JSW Steel), Mr. B.K Goenka (Chairman, Welspun Group), Mr. D.P Deshpande (Chairman, SIMA), Mr. Deependra Kashiva (ED, SIMA)

Moderator – Mr. Syedain Abbasi (Jt. Secretary, Ministry of Steel)

Session Youtube link - <https://youtu.be/suAS7nkHLj4>

Key takeaways from the panel discussion:-

On NSP 2017 Goal of 300 MTPA

- The goal of 300 MTPA capacity by FY31 is achievable and the industry is well on track to meet the FY20 goal of 160 MT.
- Huge land availability in several existing big plants would ensure a lot of brownfield capacity additions over the next 10 years.
- Need of big ticket Greenfield projects might remain limited.
- Industry could be at a demand inflection point currently with an increase in per capita consumption coupled with progress in several infrastructure projects.

Industry's expectations from Gol

- Logistics is a big cost so infrastructure should be developed to reduce that cost. Transportation cost from China to India is \$30/ton, as compared to \$60/ton from India's eastern region to western region. Rigorous follow-up of key policy measures required to reduce logistics cost apart from infrastructure build-up.
- In India R&D expense is <1% of revenue for steel industry, whereas globally it is 2-3% of the revenue and industry needs to invest in R&D.
- Higher interest cost and depreciation are issues in the sector which need immediate attention for sustainable solutions.
- Most of the steel companies are EBITDA positive however a major problem lies in higher capex cost. Due to delays in project implementation capex cost escalates. Faster government clearances are required for reducing capex cost.
- Government should incentivize green steel production.
- Two key initiatives by Gol in the last few years has helped the industry – i) implementation of BIS standards, and ii) the preference for domestic steel in government projects.

Steps needed from the industry itself for improvement

- Blast furnace efficiency should increase from current level to high levels similar to China's steel producers'.
- Improving productivity, specific consumptions by the industry as a permanent measure to improve the profitability, even after the disadvantage of poor quality of raw materials.
- Improve the quality of domestic coking coal and increase its consumption in steel making

Role of small scale units (MSME) in capacity creation

- MSME re-classification and scrapping of the secondary steel sector would help the industry and incentivise investments by smaller players with much stronger balance sheets
- There are 300 DRI manufacturers across India. It is a good substitute to scrap. DRI requires lesser skills/automation compared to the steel industry. Energy efficiency of sponge iron producers is increasing

Banking Institutions Session – Pillars gearing back to support growth?

Panel – Ms. Arundhati Bhattacharya (Chairman, SBI)

Moderator – Mr. Saraswati Prasad (Additional Secretary, Ministry of Steel)

Session Youtube link - <https://youtu.be/8B7w1rUra3g>

Key takeaways from the panel discussion:-

Why is the banking sector reluctant to lend to the sector:

- Steel sector accounts for 4-5% of the overall banking credit. However, in terms of overall GNPA's, the steel sector's GNPA is at 19% vs. 0.54% for the housing sector. With NIM at 2.5%, on a standalone basis, the provisioning towards these exposures/ sector would tantamount to losses on the income statement.
- The steel sector is seeing large amounts of NPAs owing to overleveraging which was mainly due to the inability to service interest during the construction phase or cost/time overruns. *Subvention scheme, similar to the one provided for the textile industry can prove beneficial to the steel sector.*

What is it that the steel companies need to get in place:

- From a systemic perspective, development of the steel sector is vital for nation building. However margins remain thin in this space and susceptible to cyclicity. *Main factors impacting credit to the sector have been a) steel players' inability to modernize, and b) non-transparency of data by the corporates, both of these make banks wary of lending to this space.* Steel companies should collaborate rather than cannibalize each other as stiff competition is unhealthy.
- In the longer-run, steel plays an important role in the development of the economy and job creation. Implementation of GST too has had a positive impact.
- *The pre-requisites for availing project finance include: a) all project related approvals should be in place, b) land issues should be sorted in terms of ownership, and c) the promoters should invest equity in a timely and appropriate manner. According to the SBI chief, "Banks will support credit demand of the sector / corporate that makes commercial sense".*

On lending rate / alternate mechanisms to fund the credit requirement of the sector:

- According to Steel secretary – Dr. Aruna Sharma, sustainable EBIDTA margin for the sector is 17-18% which can service interest cost of 6-7%. The existing effective lending rate is at 9-10% and thus the sector is in stress. In a reply to the same, SBI chief commented, a rate cut cannot effectively translate to lower lending rates as: For SBI, 97% of the sources of funds are deposits, the balance 3% being borrowings. The impact of a repo rate cut is only on 3% of the sources of funds. The CASA deposits (40-45% of total deposits) are interest rate insensitive and only fixed deposits are rate sensitive and over 2-3 years these rates have already reduced from 9-9.5% to 6-7%. SBI MCLR is at 8% (one of the lowest in the space) making it impossible for banks to lend at a lower rate owing to higher risks in the steel sector as compared to housing.
- **Alternate mechanism like a) PSL status** can be given to the sector which may reduce the lending yield for banks as in the current scenario banks are grappling with fulfilling their PSL requirements and the PSLC certificates are anyway unattractive from a margin perspective owing to low yields and/or b) **Infrastructure status** to the sector could enable corporates to attract money from investors at relatively lower rates.
- Interest subvention scheme can be sought from the Finance Ministry by the Steel Ministry but the steel secretary clarified that this was not being considered currently by the Steel Ministry.
- Modernization of steel units is important and hence Gol can think of TUF like schemes for such kind of modernization related funding



Mr. Saraswati Prasad
Additional Secretary, Ministry of Steel



Ms. Arundhati Bhattacharya
Chairman, SBI

Mining & Logistics Companies Session – Decisive pieces in the NSP Design



Mr. Syedain Abbasi
Jt. Secretary, Ministry of Steel



Mr. Tuhin Mukherjee
MD, Essel Mining



Mr. T R K Rao
Director-Commercial, NMDC



Mr. M V Subbarao
CMD, KIOCL



Mr. Prabhas Dansana
ED - TTS, Railway Board

Panel – Mr. Tuhin Mukherjee (MD, Essel Mining), Mr. T R K Rao (Director-Commercial, NMDC), Mr. M V Subbarao (CMD, KIOCL), Mr. Prabhas Dansana (ED - TTS, Railway Board)

Moderator – Mr. Syedain Abbasi (Jt. Secretary, Ministry of Steel)

Session Youtube link - https://youtu.be/kesglS_EIM8

Key takeaways from the panel discussion:-

On pricing and relationship with steel sector

- Iron ore buyers and sellers are always at loggerheads but they need to work together for a better growth path.
- Merely owning captive mines will also not help. Many companies across the world are making money without having captive mines.
- There was an iron ore shortage due to illegal mining issues but now there is abundant availability.
- Iron ore prices have cooled off but other costs have gone up for miners.
- Iron ore prices are deregulated. *There has to be some price discovery with composite dialogue with all stakeholders. There is merit in having quarterly/long term contracts and hence spot prices do not change business dynamics there.*
- Iron ore prices follow steel prices not vice versa.
- Logistics cost is an important and significant cost for miners and steelmakers alike. Focus on optimising the same is paramount.
- There should be focus on scientific mining and on inclusive mining. Mining cost consideration should also focus on the size of the mine.

Railways' support for the steel sector:

- Steel industry is important to the Railways as the steel ecosystem comprises 23% of the total railway traffic in India.
- **High freight cost by railways has been a recurring issue at various meetings with the industry.**
- From Railways' perspective, there are lots of capacity constraints which have only recently been taken up by the current government which has earmarked Rs8.5 lakh crore till 2019.
- The Railways is also subsidising Rs30,000Cr every year in passenger freight which needs to be covered through goods freight.
- As the Railways is currently in expansion phase, it will also need to fund its interest expense. Hence, it does not see a case of freight rate reduction in the near term.
- **Railways seem well on course on capacity addition which can meet the logistics need of 300MT by 2030.**
- It is also setting up Private Freight terminals and special type of wagons which can improve logistics for the steel sector. It has started partnering with industry through asking private customers to invest in special type of wagons and they will be given handling support/facilities.

Appendix A

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