

Steelworld

(ISO 9001 : 2008 Certified)

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PRICE

(Inclusive of Service Tax 12.36%)

1 Year	₹ 3371	US\$ 253
2 Years	₹ 6461	US\$ 449
3 Years	₹ 9551	US\$ 646

(Only by Subscription)

Printed & Published by : D. A. Chandekar for Sanket Prakashan
at 1, Alpha, M. G. Road, Vile Parle (E), Mumbai - 57. Printed at
C. C. Printer, 30 Kamdar Shopping Centre, Monghibai Road,
Vile Parle (E), Mumbai - 400 057.
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Editorial Desk

Dear Readers,

The recently concluded '11th Iron & Steel Summit' raised many issues of vital importance to the discussion table. First of all it is very clear that industry is going through one of its most challenging periods. Many senior executives argued that they have not seen such a gloom in their multi decade long career. This means that the situation is worse than one in 1992 and even during 1998 SE Asian currency crisis. What we are witnessing today is stagnation of demand, non-availability of iron ore and coal and high input costs.

Many steel mills have no option but to close down their operations. Of course the silver lining to all this is that we all know that like every other industry sector, steel industry also follows a cyclic path and the situation is likely to change after some period. One more argument in this regard could be the monsoon this year has been good in most of the parts and this can give some boost to the economy in general.

In such a grave situation no expansion can be thought but we can surely think of enhancing the operational efficiency, reducing the costs and inducing some viability to the project. One way of increasing the efficiency is to use a better technology and equipment. Another way is to improve the process to achieve better yield.

Today, hot charging and slit rolling have become the buzz words in steel sector. Hot charging of billets can not only eliminate the need for costly equipment like re-heating furnace but can save the energy as well. Slit rolling can improve production levels and thus reduce the operational costs. It was felt by the forum that in today's times, such advanced processes have to be employed so as to improve the overall performance of the plant. The new quality order of the government which is supposed to be in effect from 1st October 2013 also triggered some discussion.

The order restricts sulphur and phosphorus below 0.05 % and also S + P less than 0.105 %. As we all know it is impossible to reduce these elements in an induction furnace they will have to employ an additional refining pot for this purpose.

I do agree that many metallurgists and researchers are working in this area but till now no concrete solution has emerged. Further, in today's bad scenario, plants based on induction furnace are not in a position to invest for additional capital equipment. If the government strictly follows this order, many such units will have to be closed.

I hope the government and the industry co-operate over this crucial issue and come out with a mutually acceptable solution!

D. A. Chandekar

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