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PRICE

(Inclusive of Service Tax 15%)

1 Year	₹ 3450	US\$ 259
2 Years	₹ 6613	US\$ 460
3 Years	₹ 9776	US\$ 661

(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,

Chhattisgarh is one of the minerally rich states of the country. With immense reserves of iron ore and non coking coal, last few years saw the emergence of sponge iron based steel industry in the state. As we all know, coal based sponge iron making requires non coking coal and thus hundreds of small and medium scale sponge iron units were established in the state. Sponge iron served as a good replacement for melting scrap which was already in short supply. This industry started growing by the turn of 20th century and was supposed to be one of the most profitable industry at that time. When competition increased, these units did forward integration by adding steel making and rolling facilities. Also, they used hot flue gases being emitted from the kiln to produce power which was in turn utilized to run the whole plant. Few plants also started producing Ferro alloys from this co-generated power. Meanwhile, government strengthened pollution control norms to reduce the pollution being created by these plants. Gradually, Chhattisgarh became a major contributor to the national iron & steel production. Its capital Raipur is now- a -days rightly referred as 'new steel capital' of the country!

In spite of all this bright past, today the iron & steel sector in this state is fighting hard for the survival. Many stand alone units have closed down and the integrated ones are mostly running in losses. Demand stagnation, rising power costs, non availability of vital raw materials has sucked out the viability from the whole process chain.

If one sees other steel making states like Odisha, Jharkhand, Karnataka the situation is more or less the same. Presently, there is very thin margin at every process step in iron & steel sector. Presently, the country produces more than 80 million tons of steel and the Steel Ministry has projected a huge 300 MT steelmaking capacity by 2025. First of all, the figure looks too big and somewhat unrealistic. Secondly, if the industry is entangled with so grave viability issues, how can it think of such a massive expansion plan?

D. A. Chandekar