

Steelworld

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Editorial Desk

Dear Readers,

Special steels form an important section of steel industry. As everybody knows, special steels have huge application in auto and engineering sector. Before western world melt down in 2008, the whole sector was quite optimistic about the growth prospects of not only steel producers but also about the auto components industry. Analysts and industry experts sure that India is poised to become hub of automobile and auto components industry worldwide and exports will surge in coming years. Accordingly, many steel units and auto components manufacturing units such as forging units had planned huge expansions to cater to this additional requirement.

Unfortunately due to melt down, the export markets collapsed and even domestic markets shranked for quite some time. Now the domestic markets seem to be recovering, thanks to the good performance of Indian auto sector. The western world continues its fight for survival and is expected to take a long time before it reaches pre melt down levels. This has put enormous pressure on steel component industry and naturally they are justified in exploring other steel sources from outside India. As on now, many forging units are importing a part of their steel requirement mainly due to price considerations. Indian steel mills are loosing this business and they have to it seems they have to choose between volumes and price. A very difficult decision !!!

Another important factor is changing perspective and requirements of automobile sector, the end user industry of steel and steel components. No doubt steel still remains the most preferred material for auto with around 65 % share in its inputs. But the threats from other materials like aluminium, other metals and composites are also emerging and this can not be overlooked. In last few years, aluminium share in an automobile has increased by 30 % and steel industry has lost this business for ever. A consortium has been formed by auto industry to do research and develop new materials and components which will support next generation automobiles. These auto makers may fight against each other in marketplace but have come together for common interest and mutual benefits. Why can't steel producers think on similar lines? Why can't they come together to develop say new series of micro alloys which will partially or totally eliminate need for heat treatment of components? This will benefit everybody- steel mills, forging units and automakers. Else Indian steel mills will continue to loose business share to either new materials or to overseas mills. Choice is theirs!!!

D. A. Chandekar