## Flat steel prices soften on higher supply

#### Global crude steel production down ~2% YoY in January

According to data from the World Steel Association (WSA), global crude steel production was under pressure for the second straight month, down ~2% YoY to ~148mn tonne in January. This decline is primarily attributed to a fall of ~7% YoY in China's production while the Rest of the World (ROW) was up ~4% YoY. However, there was a MoM recovery of ~8%, led by a surge of ~15% in China and ~2% in ROW. In January, India's crude steel production growth slowed to ~7% YoY vs double-digit growth in the range of 11-19% YoY during June-December 2023. On a MoM basis, growth stood at ~2%. As per provisional data, India's crude steel production has grown ~14% YoY but fallen ~4% MoM in February, due to lower operational days.

#### Lull in activity during Lunar New Year takes a toll on steel prices

A three consecutive MoM rise in China's exports prices of hot rolled coil (HRC) came to a halt in February with a decline of ~1% MoM. This was followed by a MoM fall in HRC prices of ~2% in Japan and ~9% in the US. Conversely, prices in North Europe rose ~1% MoM. Meanwhile India saw another subdued month, with HRC prices falling by ~1% MoM while primary long product prices remain largely flat MoM. While higher inventory and limited buying interest weighed on prices of domestic long products, absence of any major relief from imports, limited exports opportunities and increased supply from NMDC's steel plant and Jindal Steel and Power's (JSPL) new hot strip mill added further pressure to domestic flat prices. Current (March to date) domestic HRC prices are down ~2% MoM but primary long product prices are flat MoM vs February average. Apart from steel, iron prices also showed a downward trend with Australia and China falling ~8% MoM each. Current (March to date), iron ore prices in China and Australia are down ~6% MoM each vs February average. Domestically, NMDC did not revise prices after the price hikes on 24 January 2024.

#### Key non-ferrous metals show a mixed price trend

In February, price of LME Nickel was up a mere ~1% MoM. On the other hand, prices of LME Aluminium and LME Zinc were down ~1% MoM and ~6% MoM, respectively. Prices of LME Copper and LME Lead were primarily flat MoM.

#### Thermal coal prices recover from the recent lows

Coking coal prices in China were down ~4% MoM followed by ~5% MoM fall in Australia. Thermal coal prices rose ~1% MoM in China; however, South Africa remains under pressure for the third consecutive month with a fall of ~4% MoM. Current (March to date), coking coal prices in China and Australia drop further by ~6% MoM and ~3% MoM, respectively. Contrary to this, thermal coal prices in South Africa are up ~6% MoM vs the February average.

#### Our view: flat steel pricing pressure to persist

We believe primary long steel prices are close to bottoming considering the spread between primary and secondary rebar has fallen below the long-term average and the recent uptick in thermal coal prices. However, flat steel prices are expected to remain under pressure in CY24 on account of capacity ramp-up by NMDC and JSPL, inflow of imports and upcoming capacity additions by JSW Steel and Tata Steel. Aluminum prices are likely to see support from less supply of bauxite from Guinea, the second-largest producing nation, due to nationwide strike by workers' associations.

### Price performance

(%)	ЗМ	6M	12M
Nifty	6.8	11.7	28.3
NSE Metal Index	9.0	16.2	45.2
JSW Steel	(4.2)	0.2	20.4
Tata Steel	17.2	18.2	41.1
Hindalco Industries	0.3	10.7	30.4
Jindal Steel and Power	7.9	17.7	40.1
NMDC	22.1	63.7	95.2
Steel Authority of India	29.8	38.4	47.3
APL Apollo Tubes	(2.3)	(1.9)	32.8
Ratnamani Metals & Tubes	(21.8)	(1.4)	22.8
Jindal Stainless	21.2	29.5	111.5
Note: pricing as on 12 March	2024		

Note: pricing as on 12 March 2024 Source: Bloomberg, Elara Securities Research

#### Steel raw material prices soften

				% chg		
Commodity prices by region	Unit	Current	As on	One- month	Two- month	
Raw materials						
China iron ore	USD/tonne	119	8-Mar	(7.4)	(15.7)	
Australia iron ore	USD/tonne	118	8-Mar	(7.5)	(15.7)	
China coking coal	USD/tonne	303	8-Mar	(11.7)	(15.9)	
Australia coking coal	USD/tonne	306	8-Mar	(1.9)	(8.1)	
South Africa thermal coal	USD/tonne	98	8-Mar	6.5	(1.0)	
China thermal coal	USD/tonne	129	26-Feb	1.9	(1.9)	
Global steel						
China HRC export	USD/tonne	550	8-Mar	(2.7)	(4.3)	
North Europe HRC	USD/tonne	777	8-Mar	(4.0)	2.8	
Japan HRC	USD/tonne	590	8-Mar	(4.8)	(6.3)	
US HRC	USD/tonne	775	8-Mar	(26.2)	(29.2)	
Domestic steel						
India HRC (Mumbai)	INR/tonne	52,900	4-Mar	(2.1)	(3.1)	
India primary rebar (Mumbai)	INR/tonne	51,900	4-Mar	(0.4)	(0.6)	
Non-ferrous						
Aluminium	USD/tonne	2,195	8-Mar	0.2	0.3	
China alumina	USD/tonne	463	8-Mar	(0.5)	2.6	
Copper	USD/tonne	8,487	8-Mar	5.0	1.8	
Zinc	USD/tonne	2,492	8-Mar	7.8	0.4	
Lead	USD/tonne	2,097	8-Mar	2.0	3.3	
Nickel	USD/tonne	17,803	8-Mar	13.0	10.8	

Source: Bloomberg, SteelMint, Elara Securities Research

12 March 2024

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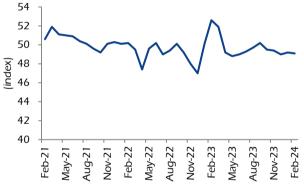


#### Exhibit 1: Non-ferrous prices outperform ferrous

Prices	Unit	Q3FY23	Q4FY23	Q1FY24	Q2FY24	Q3FY24	Current	as on	Variance (%)
Raw materials									
China iron ore	USD/tonne	100	126	111	115	129	119	8-Mar	(8.2)
Australia iron ore	USD/tonne	99	126	112	115	129	118	8-Mar	(8.5)
China coking coal	USD/tonne	336	345	261	267	330	303	8-Mar	(8.2)
Australia coking coal	USD/tonne	279	344	244	262	334	306	8-Mar	(8.3)
South Africa thermal coal	USD/tonne	228	150	117	109	116	98	8-Mar	(15.6)
China thermal coal	USD/tonne	202	165	131	119	133	129	26-Feb	(2.7)
Global steel									
China HRC export	USD/tonne	550	641	577	554	543	550	8-Mar	1.4
North Europe HRC	USD/tonne	697	832	850	719	703	777	8-Mar	10.5
Japan HRC	USD/tonne	565	686	642	592	596	590	8-Mar	(1.0)
US HRC	USD/tonne	703	876	1,082	812	888	775	8-Mar	(12.8)
Domestic steel									
India HRC (Mumbai)	INR/tonne	55,608	59,308	57,588	56,619	56,038	52,900	4-Mar	(5.6)
India primary rebar (Mumbai)	INR/tonne	56,303	61,503	56,203	53,462	55,455	51,900	4-Mar	(6.4)
Non-ferrous									
Aluminium	USD/tonne	2,336	2,403	2,260	2,160	2,194	2,195	8-Mar	0.1
China Alumina	USD/tonne	392	425	402	396	414	463	8-Mar	11.9
Copper	USD/tonne	8,025	8,944	8,474	8,368	8,177	8,487	8-Mar	3.8
Zinc	USD/tonne	3,012	3,137	2,540	2,436	2,498	2,492	8-Mar	(0.2)
Lead	USD/tonne	2,105	2,136	2,119	2,172	2,116	2,097	8-Mar	(0.9)
Nickel	USD/tonne	25,514	26,070	22,366	20,392	17,251	17,803	8-Mar	3.2

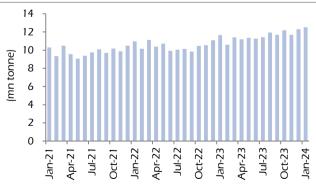
Note: Variance between current and Q3FY24 average prices; Source: Bloomberg, SteelMint, Elara Securities Research





Source: Bloomberg, Elara Securities Research





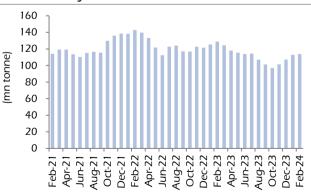
Source: CMIE, Elara Securities Research

Exhibit 3: China pulls down global crude steel production growth



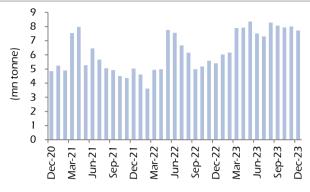
Source: World Steel Association, Elara Securities Research





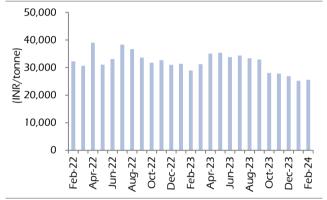
Source: Bloomberg, Elara Securities Research

# Exhibit 6: China's exports volume rises ~43% YoY but down ~3% MoM in December



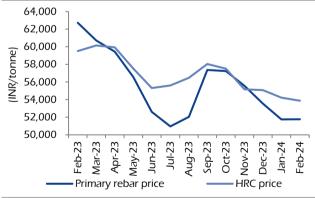
Source: Bloomberg, Elara Securities Research

Exhibit 8: Spot spread rises ~INR 350/tonne in February vs January



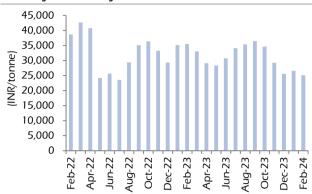
Source: SteelMint, Company, Elara Securities Research

Exhibit 10: HRC prices at ~INR 2,100 premium vs primary rebar prices in February



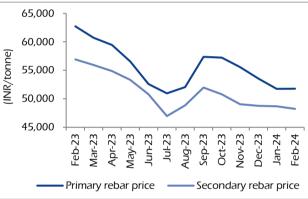
Source: SteelMint, Elara Securities Research

# Exhibit 7: Lag spread drops ~INR 1,500/tonne in February vs January



Note: Two-month and one-month lag considered for coking coal and iron ore Source: SteelMint, Company, Elara Securities Research

Exhibit 9: Primary rebar prices at ~INR 3,540/tonne premium vs secondary rebar prices in February



Source: SteelMint, Elara Securities Research



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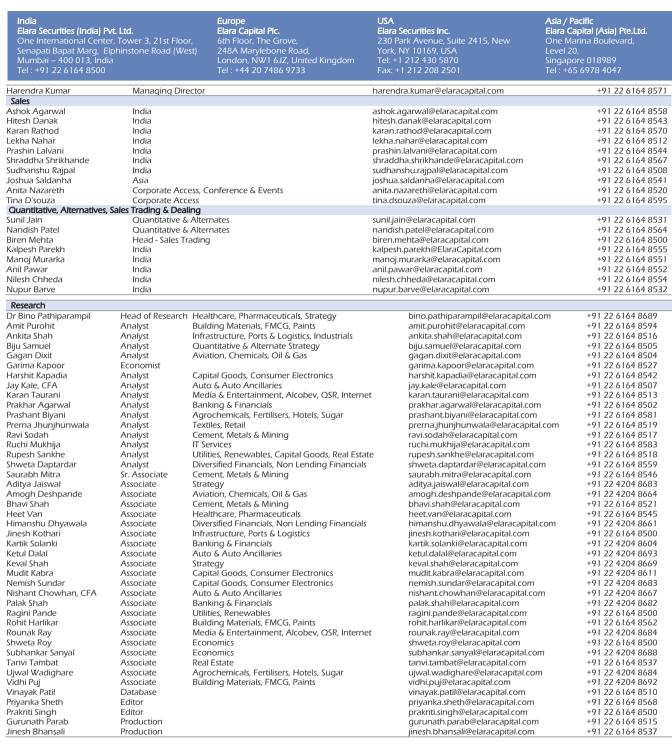
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