

Hindalco (BUY)

JSPL (BUY)

SAIL (SELL)

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INDIA

Metals



Non-ferrous counter looks more attractive

With Chinese demand (across commodities) remaining weak as the traditional peak season approaches, there are obvious risks to steel prices – which globally are still at all-time highs and have not seen any meaningful correction (despite sharp drop in iron ore prices). Globally, steel stocks have seen meaningful compression in multiples (*table-7*) as consensus globally expects a sharp correction in steel prices soon. Timing is a concern, and each day the correction gets postponed, deleveraging adds to fair value. *Table-2* highlights the gap that currently exists between MTM, I-Sec and consensus earnings across our coverage universe. We are more constructive on aluminium; maintain BUY on Hindalco. We upgrade JSPL to BUY, and downgrade NMDC to HOLD from Add.

- ▶ **Steel equities – MTM earnings continue to look up, adding to the possibility of a year-end risk on.** Weakening Chinese demand (Caixin manufacturing PMI fell below 50 for the first time since Apr'20) and declining iron ore prices continue to bear upon expected FY22 earnings for steel equities. **Consensus (globally)**, including I-Sec, keeps factoring-in a steep drop in steel prices in H2FY22. The drop in prices of some commodities like iron ore and lumber, have shown the template – iron ore corrected 40% in one month. We expect Chinese demand recovery by year-end given government announcements ([Link](#)), and Chinese production cuts, as upside risks. Despite such a sharp fall in iron ore prices, **Chinese steel profitability failed to improve, which along with the stimulus announced, puts a base to the fall in regional steel prices.** Domestic (India) retail prices have been under pressure in line with demand weakness; yet, unless steel prices fall by 30-40% from here, that too in a limited timeframe, we believe deleveraging will keep accruing higher fair value for the steel stocks. We upgrade JSPL to **BUY** from **Add** with a target price of Rs542/share – EGM on 3rd Sep'21 witnessed minority approval of JSPL's stake sale in JPL to the promoter entity (Worldone).
- ▶ **Decarbonisation-driven supply-side reforms can potentially help steel earnings, yet multiples are not expanding anywhere globally.** The periodic attempts to rejig Chinese export duties (as in May'21 and Jul'21; a follow-through is expected in Sep/Oct'21) is an indicator enough, apart from the state narrative, that China wants to follow the decarbonisation priority it has articulated. This will imply constraints on steel production and exports (progressively) out of China. Also, as per CISA presentation, this also entails ~ RMB500/te of added steelmaking costs due to incremental investments. **Globally P/B bands for steel equities are quite compressed irrespective of the improving leverage dynamics (similar trend is seen in India).**
- ▶ **Chinese aluminium profitability at record high.** The latest surge in aluminium prices has ensured that gross spreads for Chinese players have reached record highs. Chinese non-ferrous metals industry association held a meeting with top-10 aluminium smelters on a speculative surge in aluminium prices. This highlights the fact that, while power production constraints in regions like Guangxi have led to production cuts [some estimates of the cut are up to 0.5mtpa ([Link](#))], the perceptions of the deficit are not accurate in our view. We have seen more structural statements from Alcoa CEO Mr. Roy Harvey – “country (China) appearing determined to meet its decarbonisation targets...”. Hongqiao has relocated ~2mnte of aluminium production from Shandong to its hydro powered smelter in Yunnan province ([Link](#)) which we think is quite remarkable. Add to that the increasing demand from EVs will disproportionately benefit aluminium, and that the scrap LME spreads continue to soar (*Chart-10*), we maintain **BUY** on Hindalco. There are risks to aluminium prices due to reversing carry trade as tapering starts, and scrap LME spread deteriorating, **yet Hindalco looks the best-placed play in commodities now.**

Table 1: Valuation summary

	Reco		Target Price		P/E (x)			EV/E (x)			P/B (x)			RoE		
	Current	Earlier	Current	Earlier	FY21	FY22E	FY23E	FY21	FY22E	FY23E	FY21	FY22E	FY23E	FY21	FY22E	FY23E
Tata Steel	HOLD		1365		20.1	4.1	6.3	7.4	2.9	3.7	2.3	1.5	1.2	12.1	36.5	19.5
JSW Steel	HOLD		682		20.7	8.7	11.2	11.0	6.0	7.0	3.5	2.6	2.1	17.0	29.4	19.0
JSPL	BUY	ADD	542	450	6.2	5.9	8.1	4.5	3.8	4.4	1.1	1.1	0.9	16.6	28.1	16.4
SAIL	SELL		99		12.3	3.2	5.0	6.8	3.0	3.9	1.1	0.8	0.7	7.8	26.6	14.7
Hindalco	BUY	BUY	550	450	18.1	9.3	7.7	8.6	6.3	5.8	1.5	1.4	1.2	9.1	15.6	16.3
NMDC	HOLD	ADD	165	195	7.6	5.2	8.5	5.2	3.8	6.2	1.6	1.6	1.5	20.9	31.7	19.1
NALCO	HOLD		92	39	13.5	8.8	7.8	9.0	4.4	3.5	1.6	1.5	1.3	12.2	16.7	17.0

Source: I-Sec research, Company data

Table 2: MTM earnings summary

	MTM (FY22E)		FY22E (I-Sec)		Consensus EBITDA	
	EBITDA	Net Debt/ (Net Cash)	EBITDA	Net Debt/ (Net Cash)	FY22E	FY23E
Tata Steel	738,592	558,234	683,615	595,099	619,183	436,615
JSW	419,966	621,182	338,672	664,098	377,453	340,948
Jindal Steel	172,727	92,172	148,278	115,492	155,393	125,481
SAIL	321,512	285,732	268,323	316,739	260,705	195,838
NMDC	130,515	(35,157)	142,173	(38,703)	118,824	87,349
Hindalco	253,533	414,570	256,680	412,622	240,645	243,981
NALCO	33,546	(34,942)	33,326	(34,942)	31,100	28,000

Source: I-Sec research, Company data

Table 3: Valuation methodology, change in P/B and key risks

	Valuation Methodology	Key risks – Upside	Key risks – Downside
Tata Steel	1.1x FY23E book	Higher steel prices for longer period. Better than expected deleveraging. Resolution of Tata Steel Europe.	Cycle corrects itself Higher capex announcement / Inorganic acquisitions
JSW Steel	1.8x FY23E book	Higher steel prices for longer period. Better than expected deleveraging.	Cycle corrects itself Higher organic capex announcement
Jindal Steel	1.5x FY23E book	Cycle continues to stay strong. Turnaround / asset sale of power operations.	Cycle corrects itself. Higher organic capex announcement, Regulatory risks
Steel Authority	0.6x FY23E book	Cycle continues to stay strong. Higher organic capex announcement. Higher iron ore sales to continue fetching additional EBITDA.	Cycle corrects. Higher organic capex announcement, Raw material integration
Hindalco	1.41x FY23E book (1.31x P/B earlier)	Cycle continues to stay strong. Higher than expected aluminium and alumina prices. Better than expected earnings in Novelis.	Cycle corrects. Contagion risks from VIL. Novelis profitability contracts due to contraction of scrap LME spreads.
NALCO	1.3x FY23E book (0.9x FY22E earlier)	Cycle continues to stay strong. Higher than expected aluminium and alumina prices. Higher than expected volumes and captive coal mines leading to better than expected cost savings.	Cycle corrects. Higher than expected capex – delay in current projects lead to time and cost overrun.
NMDC	DCF (Reduced long term price assumptions of iron ore to Rs3000/te and long term EBITDA assumptions to Rs1,200/te)	Iron ore prices stage a recovery.	Iron ore moves to a structural oversupply, for the next couple of years driven by lower Chinese steel production and higher scrap usage.

Source: Company data, I-Sec research

Table 4: Earnings estimate change

	FY22E			FY23E		
	New	Old	% Chg	New	Old	% Chg
Tata Steel						
Sales	2,237,264	2,485,051	(10.0)	1,960,489	2,018,153	(2.9)
EBITDA	683,615	876,933	(22.0)	485,744	403,594	20.4
PAT	421,176	566,164	(25.6)	279,699	219,618	27.4
JSPL						
Sales	447,678	444,593	0.7	401,697	401,902	(0.1)
EBITDA	148,278	147,703	0.4	111,397	113,304	(1.7)
PAT	79,379	75,681	4.9	55,411	54,761	1.2
Hindalco						
Sales	1,896,872	1,882,492	0.8	1,922,658	1,799,734	6.8
EBITDA	256,680	284,695	(9.8)	277,747	247,208	12.4
PAT	110,833	129,055	(14.1)	132,520	112,692	17.6
NALCO						
Sales	115,019	109,308	5.2	120,348	105,748	13.8
EBITDA	33,326	36,482	(8.7)	36,738	33,412	10.0
PAT	19,608	21,871	(10.3)	22,121	19,888	11.2

Source: Company data, I-Sec research

Key changes in our assumptions

- Tata Steel European EBITDA reduced in FY22E from US\$377/te to US\$148/te. For FY23E, it has increased to US\$115/te from US\$58/te.
- We have increased our: 1) thermal coal procurement price assumption for India operations (for aluminium smelters), and 2) LME aluminium price assumptions for FY22E/FY23E. Our LME aluminium price forecasts for FY22E/FY23E stand at US\$2,552/2,500/te. This, adjusted for hedges, works out to ~US\$2,300/te for Hindalco India operations.
- We have raised our LME zinc price assumption for FY22E to US\$2,900/te from US\$2,700/te.

Table 5: Weekly snapshot

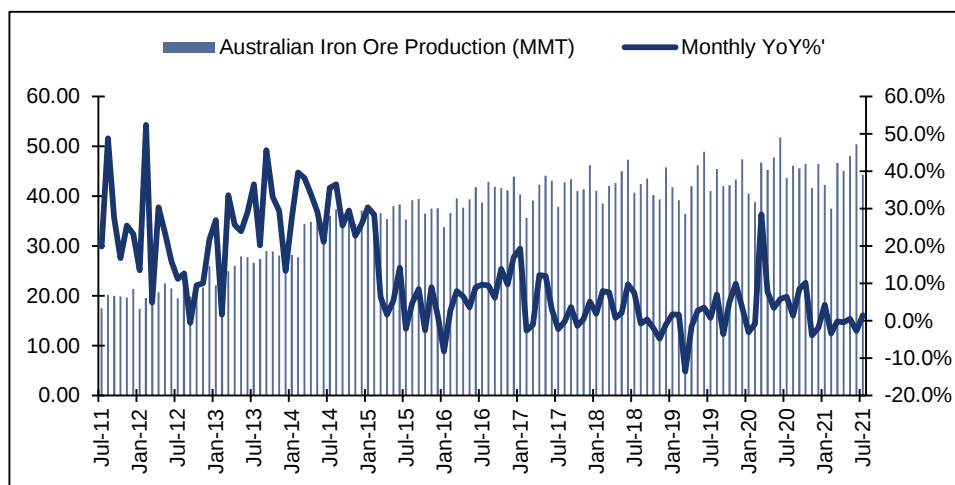
Commodity	Particular	Size, Grade	CMP (US\$/te)	Date	1W	1M	3M
Global Prices							
Iron Ore Fines	China Import	Fe 61.5%	148	01-Sep-21	4	-31	-57
Iron Ore Lumps	Indian Import	Fe 64%	165	01-Sep-21	12	-65	-85
Pellets (India)	China Import	6-20 mm, Fe 64%	163	01-Sep-21	-4	-47	-89
Coking	Australia Exports	Premium HCC	248	30-Aug-21	19	305	80.75
Non Coking	Indian Import	RB2, South Africa Origin	136.2	01-Sep-21	6.1	14.12	32.2
Scrap	Indian Import	Shredded	525	31-Aug-21	-5	-10.8	2.2
Scrap (Ship breaking)	Indian Import	Containers	580	30-Aug-21	0	0	60
Billet	India Export	150*150, 3SP/4SP	600	31-Aug-21	0	-17.5	-12
Sponge Iron	India Export	Lumps, FeM 80	475	26-Aug-21		-10	-20
Pig Iron	India Export	Steel Grade	505	28-Aug-21	-5	-3	-65
HRC	India Export	2.5mm, SAE1006	879	31-Aug-21	-23	-36	-131
CRC	India Export	0.9mm, IS 513 Gr.O	1235	01-Sep-21	0	0	-170
Domestic Prices (India)							
			(Rs/te)				
Fines/Lumps	Iron Ore Index	5-18 mm, Fe 63%, DR Grade	11450	28-Aug-21	-950	-1950	-1675
Fines/Lumps	Iron Ore Index	0-10 mm, Fe 63%	7700	28-Aug-21	-1200	-2100	-1675
Pellets	Raipur	6-20 mm, Fe 63%	12150	31-Aug-21	0	-2200	-3975
Pellets	Bellary	6-20 mm, Fe 63%	11650	31-Aug-21	-350	-1350	-2225
Coal	Ex-India (East)	25-90 mm, Met Coke, Blast Furnace	32500	01-Sep-21	0	4500	5000
Scrap	Ex-Mumbai	HMS	34300	01-Sep-21	-500	-1800	-100
Pig Iron	Ex-Ludhiana,						
	Foundry	Foundry Grade	43400	01-Sep-21	0	-400	-1300
Sponge Iron	Ex-Raipur	Mix, FeM 80%, +/-1	31900	01-Sep-21	-500	-1200	200
Billets	Ex-Mumbai	100*100 mm, IS 2831	43500	01-Sep-21	-200	-2000	700
TMT Re-bars, Secondary	Ex-Mumbai						
Mills		12-25 mm, Fe 500, IF route, IS 1786	48100	01-Sep-21	-1100	-1500	800
TMT Re-bars, Secondary	Ex-Raipur						
Mills		12-25 mm, Fe 500, IF route, IS 1786	47300	01-Sep-21	100	-300	-2200
HRC	Ex-Delhi	2.5-8mm, IS2062	64000	01-Sep-21	-300	-400	-3750
HRC	Ex-Mumbai	2.5-8mm, IS2062	65500	01-Sep-21	-800	-1800	-2000
CRC	Ex-Delhi	0.9mm, IS 513 GrO	73800	01-Sep-21	-500	-2950	-7200
CRC	Ex-Mumbai	0.9mm, IS 513 GrO	75500	01-Sep-21	1300	-4000	-8250

Source: SteelMint, Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Domestic steel trade prices are falling across the board. Indian export prices dropped US\$23/te WoW. There is a real risk now that Chinese export HRC price corrects in the peak (demand) season in our view. Coking coal prices in China need to normalise to effect the same.

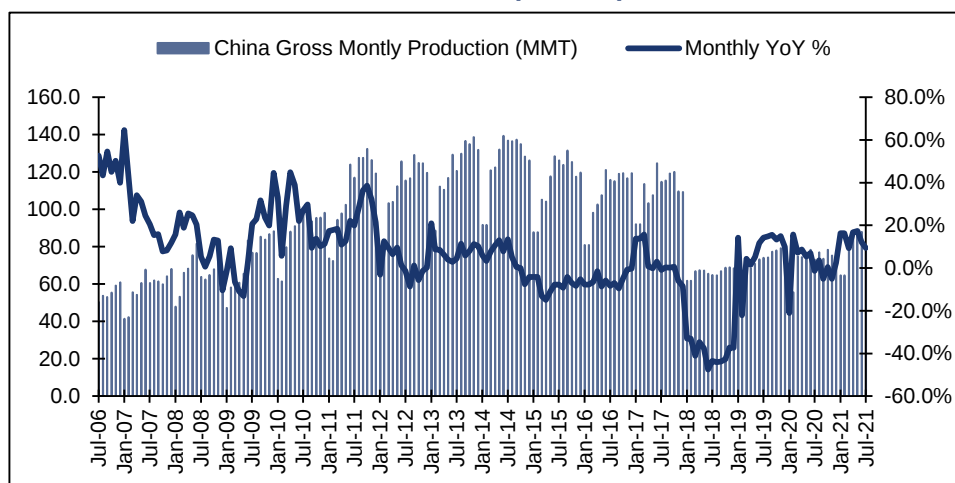
IRON Ore

There is no improvement in Australian iron ore production. We expect to see a pickup in H2CY21.

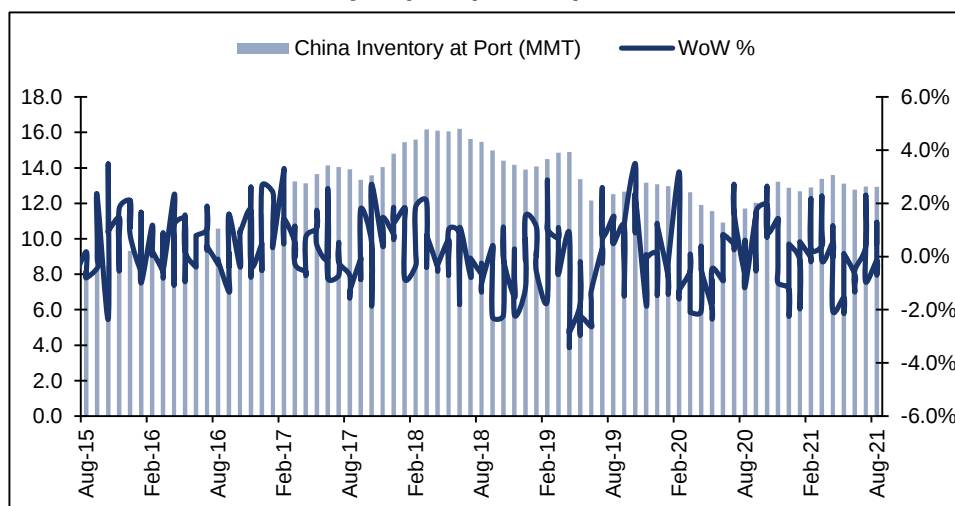
Chart 1: Australian iron ore production (in MMT)

Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chinese ore production moves up steadily. While iron ore price has corrected to US\$140/te, Chinese ore production will still be profitable.

Chart 2: Chinese Iron Ore Production (in MMT)

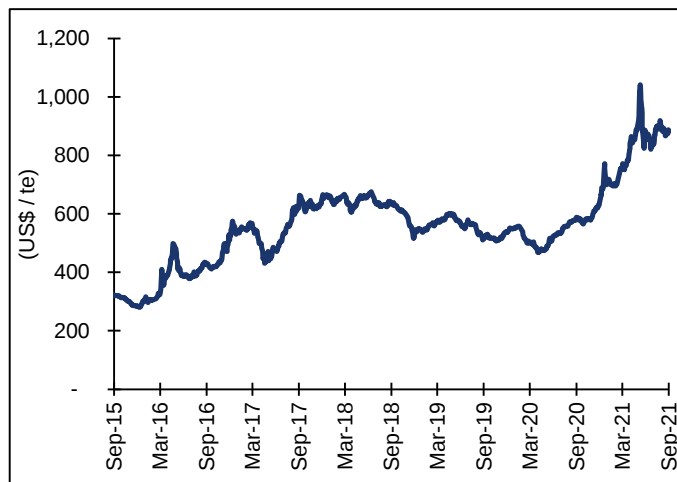
Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chart 3: Chinese inventory at port (in MMT)

Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

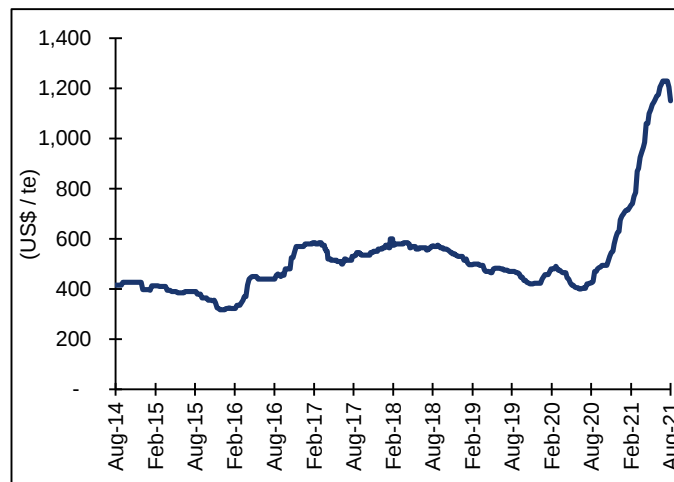
Price trend

Chart 4: Chinese domestic HRC price



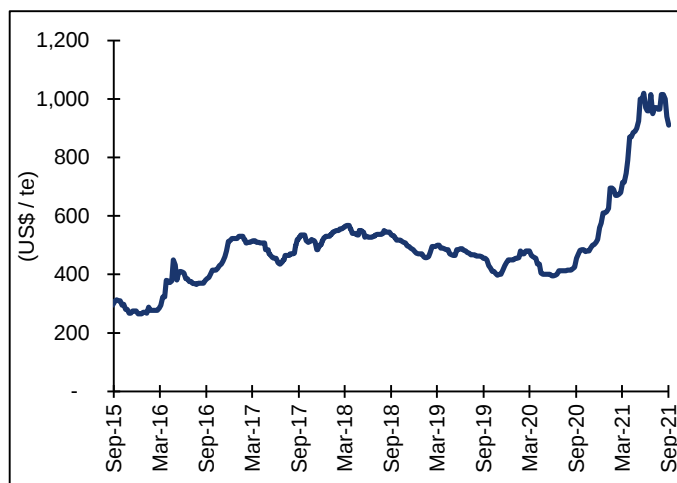
Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chart 5: North European domestic HRC price



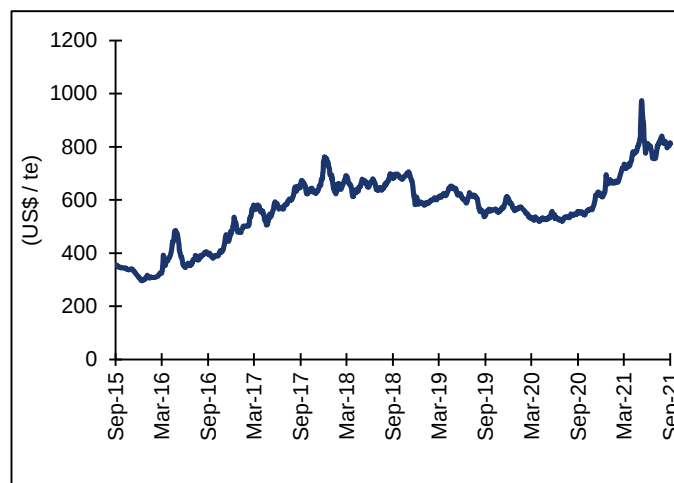
Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chart 6: South European domestic HRC price



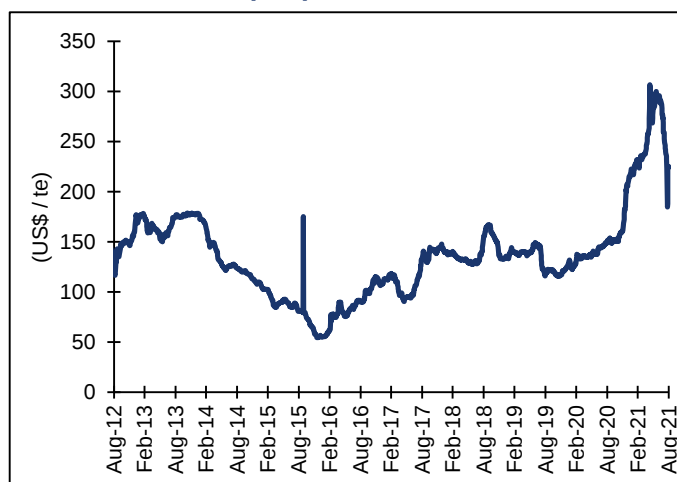
Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chart 7: Chinese FOB rebar domestic price



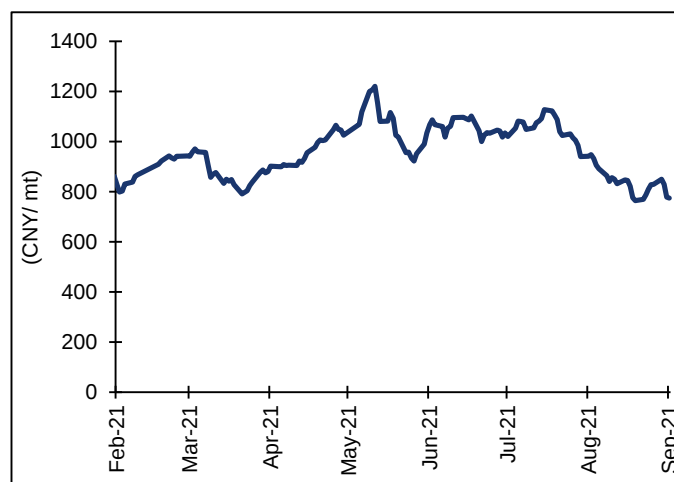
Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chart 8: Iron ore spot price



Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

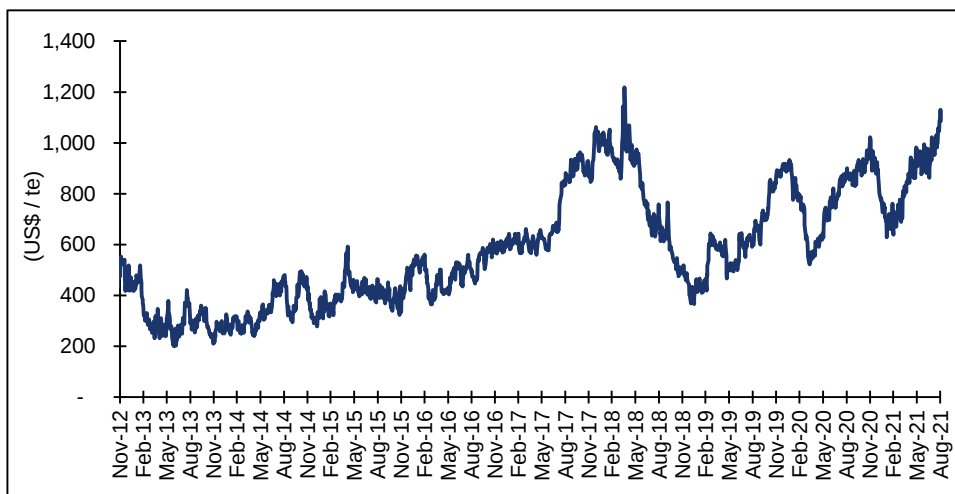
Chart 9: China iron ore futures



Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Scrap LME spread continues to increase. Higher spread remains a tailwind to Novelis profitability

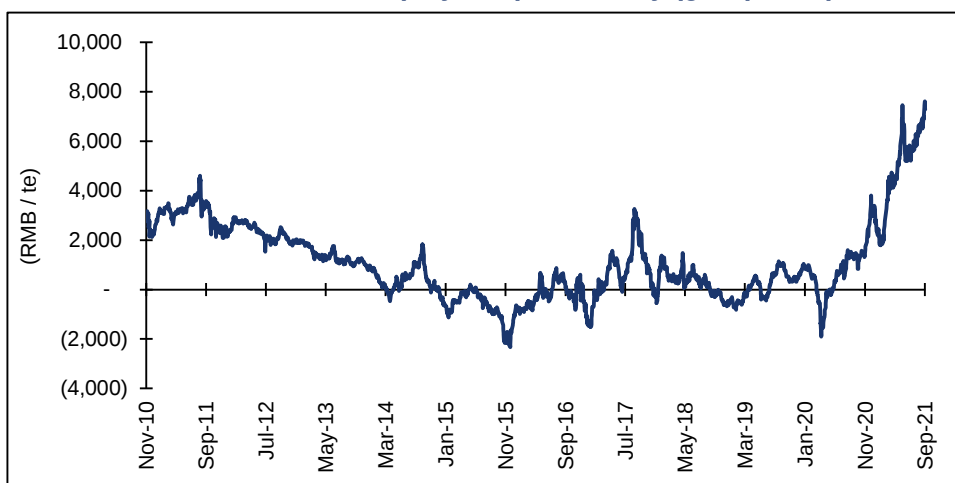
Chart 10: Scrap LME spread



Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chinese aluminium industry's profitability is at record highs. In a normalised scenario, one should expect significant increase in production in the coming months. The narrative of supply constraints due to restrictions on thermal power should lead to production loss. Moves by some of the large smelters towards hydro power (away from thermal power) has been surprising.

Chart 11: Chinese aluminium players' profitability (grid power)



Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

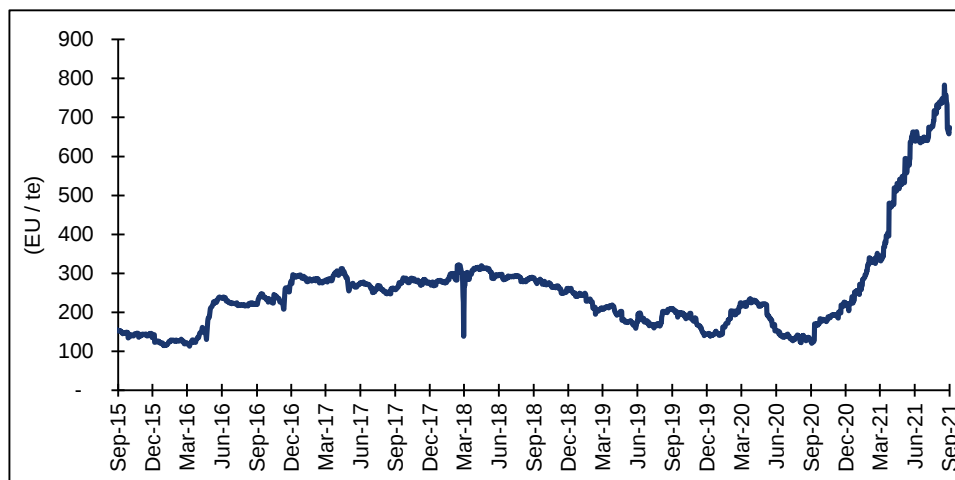
Chart 12: Chinese aluminium players' profitability (captive power)



Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chart 13: Europe BOF integrated steel profitability

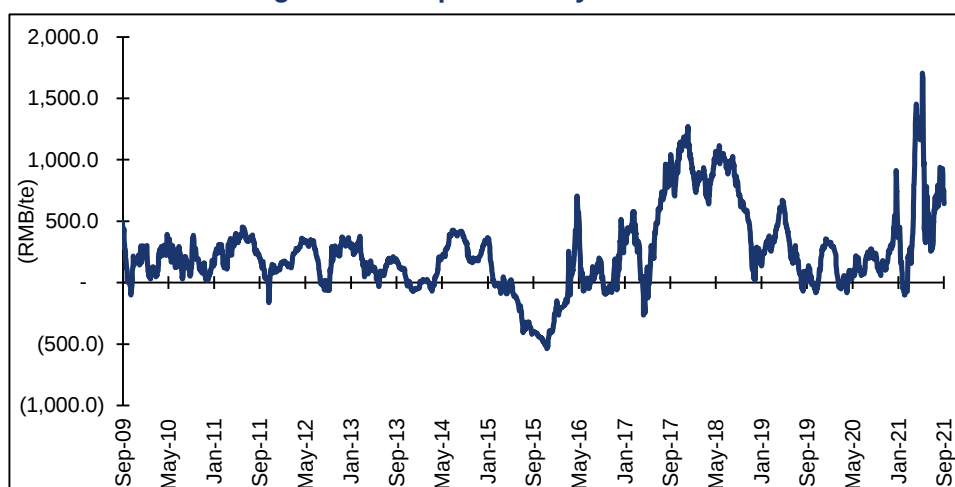
Drop in steel prices has started to shrink European profitability (despite sharp drop in iron ore prices).



Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chart 14: China integrated steel profitability

Despite lower iron ore prices, Chinese BOF profitability fails to improve due to Chinese coking coal at US\$450/te. Normalisation of the same will allow further headroom for steel prices to correct.



Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

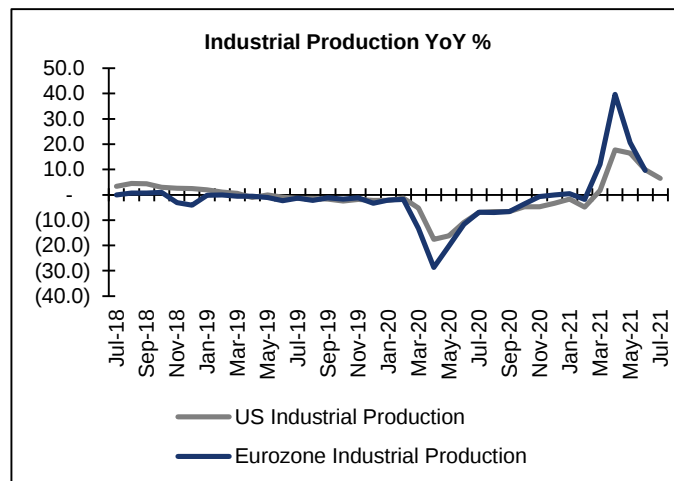
Table 6: Regional players' equity price performance

	1M%	3M%	6M%	YTD%
China				
Angang Steel Co Ltd	28.0	25.8	51.2	81.0
Baoshan Iron & Steel Co	39.3	26.2	14.1	68.4
Maanshan Iron & Steel	49.9	63.5	107.6	129.6
Hunan Valin Steel Tube & -Ahunan Valin Steel Tube & China Steel Corp	15.1	9.2	14.2	61.7
	2.3	(3.5)	50.7	53.5
Japan Steel				
Nippon Steel Corp	13.9	13.6	33.9	64.5
JFE Holdings	34.5	29.2	50.3	78.7
Kobe	(3.5)	(3.0)	(1.3)	24.1
Korea Steel				
Posco	0.5	(4.1)	12.3	20.8
Dongkuk Steel Mill Co Ltd	(0.7)	(13.6)	112.6	140.2
Hyundai Steel Co	(0.7)	(6.9)	16.8	22.5
US Steel				
Nucor	8.1	7.7	85.0	116.7
US Steel	4.1	4.1	43.7	60.6
Steel Dynamics	4.3	5.0	50.8	82.9
Russia Steel				
Severstal	(5.4)	2.9	24.6	31.8
Evrast	(3.8)	(9.5)	(1.5)	27.7
Magnitogorsk	9.4	17.5	38.1	40.9
Brazil- Steel				
CSN	(24.1)	(28.6)	5.9	7.7
Gerdau	(13.4)	(20.1)	10.9	12.3
Usinas	(20.8)	(19.2)	3.0	11.4
India Steel				
Tata Steel	3.0	26.8	82.9	121.4
JSW STEEL	(5.5)	(4.0)	60.0	77.5
SAIL	(11.2)	(1.2)	54.0	63.6
Jindal Steel	(8.4)	(4.8)	8.0	42.3
Europe Steel				
THYSENKRUP	10.3	(6.0)	(22.8)	12.1
SALZGITTER	(3.1)	20.0	22.0	43.9
Arcelormittal	(2.1)	3.7	36.5	49.0
Aluminum				
Alcoa	16.2	21.2	52.2	103.5
Rusal	9.4	0.2	37.1	66.0
Hindalco	3.0	13.7	26.1	89.1
Nalco	(2.6)	23.5	45.1	109.7
Norsk Hydro	5.5	10.7	24.0	54.0
Aluminium Corp of China	25.7	28.9	36.8	105.2
Century Aluminum	(15.4)	(1.8)	(29.2)	14.2
Miners				
BHP Billiton	(19.7)	(17.7)	(21.3)	(3.7)
Rio Tinto	(13.0)	(12.8)	(15.3)	(1.8)
Fortescue	(13.4)	(14.7)	(13.8)	(15.1)
Vale	(12.7)	(16.2)	7.5	13.0
Coal India	1.3	(3.7)	(7.6)	6.2
Peabody	50.2	118.8	310.3	610.0
Cliffs Resources	(0.5)	21.3	69.3	66.6
Zinc				
Teck resources	6.9	0.2	10.5	31.1
Freeport McMoran	(1.0)	(13.4)	3.6	39.4
First Quantum	(5.0)	(15.7)	(10.1)	10.9

Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

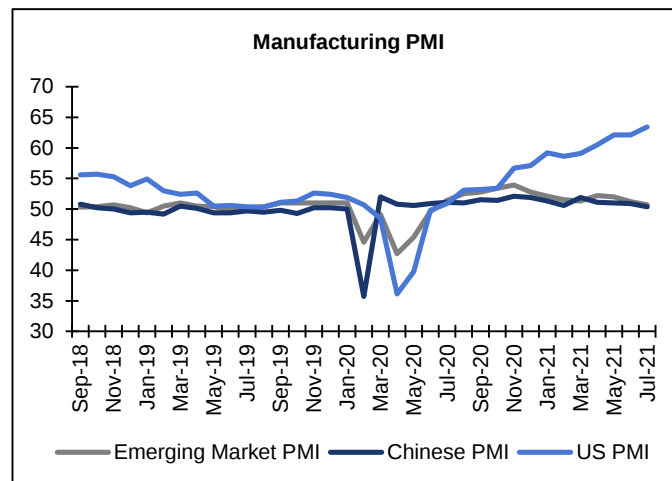
Global macro data

Chart 15: Growth in Industrial Production



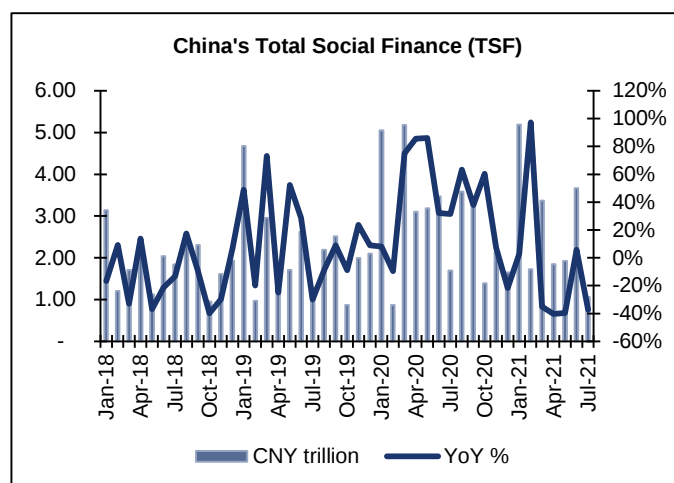
Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chart 16: Manufacturing PMI



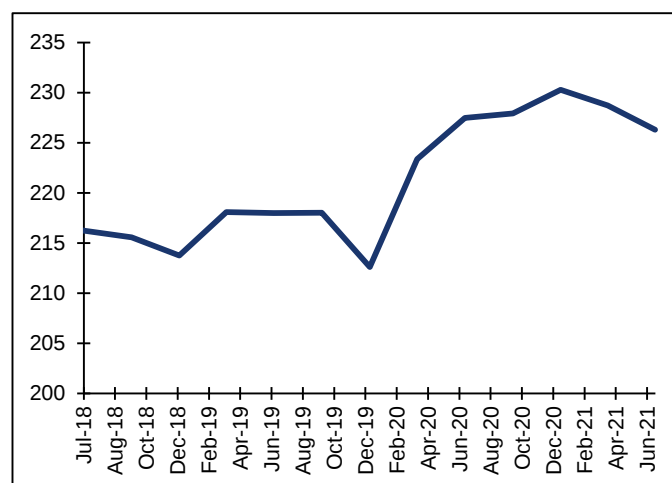
Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chart 17: China's total social finance



Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Chart 18: China's total social finance as % of GDP



Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

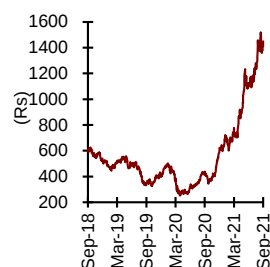
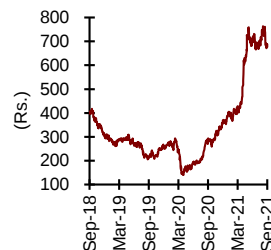
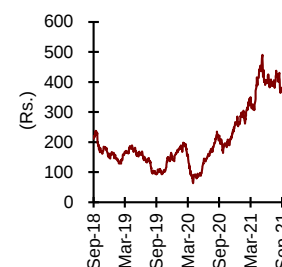
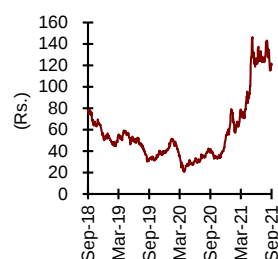
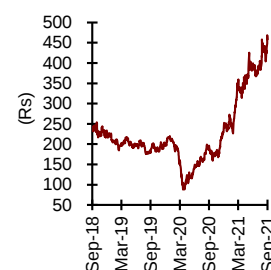
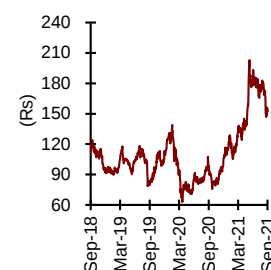
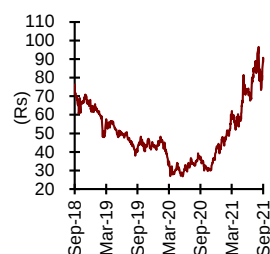
Concluding remarks:

Demand is set to weaken in the next few months across the world, as steel prices are at the peak. This makes us relatively more constructive on aluminum; even structurally the commodity seems better placed. Steel players' multiples are getting compressed globally too.

Table 7: Global steel valuations are witnessing meaningful multiple compression; Indian players are no exception

(US\$ mn)	Revenue	EBITDA	PAT	Current Market Cap	P/E (x)		EV/EBITDA (x)		RoE (%)		P/B (x)	
					1y	2y	1y	2y	1y	2y	1y	2y
United States Steel	9,741	(351)	(1,165)	6,512	2.3	5.3	2.6	4.5	44.7	13.2	0.8	0.7
Steel Dynamics	9,601	1,194	551	12,463	4.6	7.8	3.6	5.6	46.5	19.9	1.9	1.5
Nucor	20,140	1,809	721	29,254	5.3	10.6	3.8	6.8	40.2	15.0	1.9	1.7
Severstal	6,870	2,373	1,016	19,854	6.5	9.1	4.3	5.2	95.9	62.1	5.5	5.8
POSCO	49,069	5,104	1,360	27,503	6.0	6.9	3.5	3.8	11.0	8.9	0.6	0.6
Tata Steel	20,654	4,110	1,009	21,325	5.6	8.7	4.3	5.9	31.5	16.5	1.6	1.4
Steel Authority of India	9,311	1,716	559	7,212	3.9	5.8	3.6	4.7	20.9	13.8	0.9	0.8
Jindal Steel & Power	5,253	1,946	710	5,715	5.8	7.9	3.6	4.4	19.8	12.9	1.1	0.9
JSW Steel	10,756	2,699	1,066	23,093	8.3	9.9	6.1	6.7	34.2	23.0	2.7	2.1
JFE Holdings	30,443	2,115	(206)	7,370	5.1	5.4	5.7	5.9	7.6	7.5	0.4	0.4
Evraz	9,754	1,868	848	12,301	4.7	7.2	3.7	5.0	165.2	82.7	6.3	6.7
Cia Siderurgica Nacional	5,888	1,599	743	12,693	3.4	5.4	3.1	3.9	88.9	39.4	2.6	2.0
ArcelorMittal	53,270	5,070	(733)	36,515	3.7	6.2	2.8	4.4	22.8	11.1	0.8	0.7

Source: Bloomberg, I-Sec research

Price charts**Tata Steel****JSW Steel****JSPL****SAIL****Hindalco****NMDC****NALCO**

Source: Bloomberg

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