

Leading steelmakers colluded to fix prices, finds antitrust probe

CCI has sought financial statements to calculate penalties

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An investigation by the Competition Commission of India (CCI) has found that Tata Steel, JSW Steel and the state-owned Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL), along with several other steelmakers, allegedly entered into anti-competitive agreements to collude on prices, according to sources.

The CCI has sought responses from the companies on the findings of the investigation report, along with their financial statements, the sources said.

As many as 28 steel companies, according to a *Reuters* report, have been found in the alleged breach of antitrust law. The CCI investigation has also held 56 senior executives liable for price collusion over varying periods between 2015 and 2023, the report said.

A final order in the matter is yet to be issued by the antitrust watchdog, which is examining the investigation report, the sources said. The financial statements have been sought to calculate penalties in case they are imposed when the final order is delivered. JSW Steel declined to comment, while Tata Steel and SAIL did not respond to emails sent by *Business Standard*.

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Steel stocks feel the heat

Steel stocks fell up to 3 per cent on Tuesday after reports said a Competition Commission of India probe found leading steelmakers in violation of antitrust norms, alleging collusion in steel price-fixing. Shares of SAIL dropped 3 per cent, while JSW Steel and Jindal Stainless slipped 0.8 per cent and 0.5 per cent, respectively. Tata Steel bucked the trend, ending 0.3 per cent higher. The decline follows a strong run last year, when several steel stocks outper-



formed the Nifty 50.

"Metal stocks can still rise 10-15 per cent from current levels," said Kranthi Bathini, equity strategist at WealthMills Securities.

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Performance sheet

% change in share price

| Company | 2025 | 1-day | 2025 | 1-day | |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| SAIL | 29.9 | -3.0 | JSW Steel | 29.3 | -0.8 |
| Welspun Corp | 0.3 | -1.8 | Jindal Stainless | 19.7 | -0.5 |
| Shyam Metalics & Energy | 16.3 | -1.5 | Usha Martin | 20.8 | -0.4 |
| Lloyds Metals & Energy | 7.4 | -1.3 | Tata Steel | 30.4 | 0.3 |
| Ratnamani Metals & Tubes | -25.0 | -0.9 | Tube Investments of India | -26.8 | 0.8 |

Note: 1-day change over January 5 closing price Source: Bloomberg

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A procedural order is issued by the CCI to get the objections and suggestions of all parties after the Director General (DG)-Investigation submits its report. The commission itself has not yet formed a final view on the matter,” a source said.

The Commission had been investigating alleged cartelisation in the steel sector since 2021. A final investigation report was submitted by the DG-Investigation in 2025.

The Reuters report, citing an October 6 CCI order, said the investigation had “found the conduct of the parties to be in contravention” of Indian antitrust law and that “certain individuals have also been held liable”.

In January last year, Union Minister for Road Transport Nitin Gadkari, speaking at an event in Mumbai, had said that the steel and cement industry “cartels” posed a serious challenge for the country and its infrastructure development. “Steel and cement industries are in the hands of a

few people. They always decide the rates. Their cartelism is a big problem for the country,” he said.

India is the world’s second-largest steel producer, with major producers accounting for more than half of total output. Data from BigMint showed that total crude steel capacity in 2024-25 stood at 210 million tonnes, with JSW Steel accounting for 17.48 per cent, Tata Steel for 13.29 per cent and SAIL for 10.10 per cent.

According to *Reuters*, the CCI investigation began in 2021 after a group of builders alleged, in a criminal complaint filed before a state court, that nine companies were acting in concert to restrict steel supplies and drive up prices. In 2022, the watchdog had raided some small steel companies as part of its inquiry into the industry.

The probe was later expanded to as many as 31 companies and industry groups, as well as dozens of executives, according to the CCI order issued in October and reviewed by *Reuters*.

