

Industry Flash

26 September 2007 | 10 pages

India: Pure Refiners

Asset valuations to the fore

- Pure refinery stocks up sharply Last couple of weeks has seen a sharp spurt in the standalone refinery stocks viz. RPL (+22%), CPCL (+8%), MRPL (+64%), and BRPL (+29%). The re-rating has been driven by comparative asset valuations led by RPL.
- Is this justified? Greenfield refinery costs have shot up globally and therefore this does not come as a complete surprise. Post the sharp upward move, refinery stocks are trading at EV/complexity bbl of US\$1400-US\$2600, broadly in line with the current replacement cost of US\$2000-2200/complexity bbl. The higher EV/complexity bbl for RIL/RPL (US\$2200-2600) is on account of the significant tax benefits as well.
- Where is value left? CPCL, with EV/bpd of US\$8,000 and EV/complexity bbl of US\$1,000 is not only at a steep discount to RIL/RPL, but also to other PSU refiners viz. MRPL/BRPL, which are at US\$1400-1800/bbl. At EV/complexity bbl of US\$1,500, CPCL could be worth Rs490. We reiterate Buy (1L) with a Rs360 target on 5.5x mid-FY09E EV/EBITDA, at a discount to peers (6.5-7.0x).
- Cannot extend this logic to BPCL, HPCL, IOC Downstream R&M, though benefiting on their refinery assets, are still bogged down by policy uncertainty, which is not getting any better in the current political context. The resultant discount on marketing assets would continue to have an overbearing impact on these stocks. We therefore see the recent move in these stocks on "sympathy" as an exit opportunity.

Figure 1. Peer comparison on asset valuations (at current prices)

Company RPL	Throughput(kbpd) 580	EV/bpd (US\$) 36987	EV/complexity bbl (US\$) 2642
RIL	660	24639	2180
Chennai Petroleum	210	7986	998
BRPL (Not Rated)	48	8455	1409
MRPL (Not Rated)	250	16345	1816
Thai Oil	241	15063	1798

Source: Company Reports, Citigroup Investment Research

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CPCL undervalued vis-à-vis peers

		Comments
EV/Complexity bbl (US\$)	1500	At discount to large PSU peers
Nelson complexity index	7.0	
EV/bpd (US\$)	10500	Current greenfield cost of more complex refiners at US\$25,000/bpc
Capacity (bpd)	210000	
EV (Rs m)	89303	
Less: Net Debt	16730	As on Mar-08E
Equity value	72573	
Asset value per share	487	

Valuation & Risks:

Chennai Petroleum

(CHPC.BO - Rs296.05; 1L)

Valuation: Our target price of Rs360 is based on an EV/EBITDA of 5.5x mid-FY09E, meaningful discount to RIL/RPL (6.5-7.0x) to factor in smaller size, public sector status, risk of subsidies (though low in our opinion), and potential risk of merger with IOC. We base our valuation on the mid-point of FY08-09E to capture part of the decline in refining margins that we assume going forward. Though the target EV/EBITDA multiple is at the higher end of the company's past five-year historical trading band of 2.0x-5.5x, we believe it is justified by the sustained strength in the refining outlook over next 3 years. While valuing the Indian refining and marketing companies, we tend to use EV/EBITDA numbers to compare companies across the regions, thereby avoiding the differences in accounting policies on depreciation and taxation.

On conservative assumptions of EV/complexity bbl of US\$1500 (25% discount to the prevailing replacement cost), CPCL could be worth Rs490 i.e. 37% premium to our target price. This coupled with dividend yield of 5.5% (FY08E) indicates the extent of hidden value in the stock.

Risks: We rate CPCL as Low Risk. Further strength in the regional refining margins could result in upside risk to our earnings estimates. Any move by the government to implement the Downstream Regulatory Bill, set up an independent regulator and free retail pricing could give a fillip to the stock. Declines in regional refining margins will have an adverse impact on our earnings estimates for CPCL. Any move to initiate merger with its parent, IOC, may be adverse for the minority shareholders of CPCL on account of the marketing losses of the former. Sentiment towards the sector and CPCL is closely linked to event risks from sector deregulation, import duty changes on petroleum products, subsidy losses and auto fuel price hikes. Any decrease in the dividend payout policy by CPCL will adversely impact the stock. If any of these risk factors has a greater impact than we expect, CPCL's share price will likely have difficulty attaining our target price.

Bharat Petroleum

(BPCL.BO - Rs362.50; 3M)

Valuation: Our target price for BPCL of Rs385 based on an FY08E EV/EBITDA of 5.5x for core earnings and 2.0x to contribution from oil bonds. We use FY08E as a base considering a normalized earnings scenario along with improved marketing profitability (in line with lower crude) but continued policy ambiguity. While valuing the Indian oil refining and marketing companies, we prefer to use EV/EBITDA to compare companies across the region to avoid differences in accounting policies in depreciation and taxation. Our target price is also based on an FY06E P/BV of 1.4x, between the value we ascribe to HPCL and IOC, justified given the better mix of refining and marketing BPCL as compared to HPCL, but a lower proportion of high-yielding pipeline assets visà-vis IOC.

Risks: We assign a Medium Risk rating to the stock. Sentiment towards the sector and BPCL is closely linked to crude price fluctuations, sector deregulation, subsidy losses, and auto fuel price hikes. Removal of the subsidy-sharing mechanism with upstream companies and/or reduction in the oil bonds from the government could significantly impact BPCL's earnings. Upside risks to our target price include: a further decline in crude prices (to

US\$50-55/bbl) and stronger-than-expected recovery in the company's marketing profitability leading to higher-than-estimated returns; if the government took concrete pricing action on retail products to bring them in line with international prices, it would put our earnings forecasts at risk; and on the macro front, if the government were to adopt the Downstream Regulatory Bill, appoint an independent regulator, and give pricing freedom to the oilmarketing companies, it would likely give a fillip to the stock price.

Hindustan Petroleum

(HPCL.BO - Rs283.00; 3M)

Valuation: Our target price for HPCL of Rs299 is based on an FY08E EV/EBITDA of 5.5x for core earnings and 2.0x to contribution from oil bonds. We use FY08E as a base considering a normalized earnings scenario in FY08E along with improved marketing profitability but continued policy ambiguity. While valuing the Indian oil refining and marketing companies, we prefer to use EV/EBITDA to compare companies across the region to avoid differences in accounting policies in depreciation and taxation. Our target price is also based on an FY06E P/BV of 1.1x, at a discount to target multiples for BPCL and IOC. We believe this is justified given the poorer capital efficiency ratios of HPCL as a result of a higher proportion of lower-yielding marketing assets vs. refining assets.

Risks: We assign a Medium Risk rating to the stock. Sentiment towards the sector and HPCL is closely linked to crude price fluctuations, sector deregulation, subsidy losses, and auto fuel price hikes. Upside risks to our target price include: a further decline in crude prices (to US\$50-55/bbl) and stronger-than-expected recovery in the company's marketing profitability leading to higher-than-estimated returns; if the government took concrete pricing action on retail products to bring them in line with international prices, it would put our earnings forecasts at risk; and on the macro front, if the government were to adopt the Downstream Regulatory Bill, appoint an independent regulator, and give pricing freedom to the oil-marketing companies, it would likely give a fillip to the stock price.

Indian Oil

(IOC.BO - Rs454.00; 3M)

Valuation: Our target price for IOC of Rs450 is based on an FY08E EV/EBITDA of 6.0x—at a premium to BPCL and HPCL—and 2.0x the contribution from oil bonds. We are maintaining a valuation premium (for core earnings) to BPCL and HPCL considering IOC's superior revenue mix and sustainable competitive advantage. The target price includes the value of IOC's holdings in ONGC and GAIL at current market prices—worth Rs103/share at a 20% discount to the current market prices. IOC has stated its intention to liquidate a part of the cross-holdings in ONGC and GAIL in installments, the first tranche of which was completed earlier this year. While valuing the Indian oil refining and marketing companies, we prefer to use EV/EBITDA to compare companies across the regions to avoid the differences in accounting policies on depreciation and taxation. Our target price is also based on an FY06E P/BV of 1.6x, at a premium to BPCL/HPCL given IOC's lower proportion of marketing assets as a proportion of total assets.

Risks: We assign a Medium Risk rating to the stock. Sentiment towards the sector and IOC is closely linked to crude price fluctuations, sector

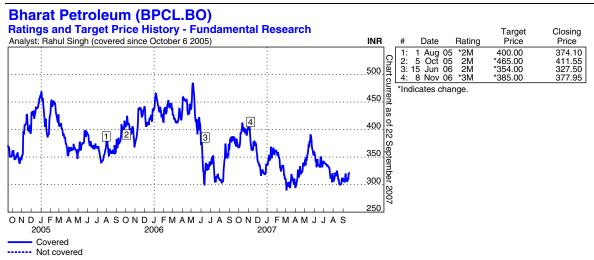
deregulation, subsidy losses, and auto fuel price hikes. Upside risks to our target price include: a further decline in crude prices (below US\$50/bbl) and stronger-than-expected recovery in the company's marketing profitability leading to higher-than-estimated returns; if the government took concrete pricing action on retail products to bring them into line with international prices, it would put our earnings forecasts at risk; full implementation of the Rangarajan Committee recommendations (especially on LPG and Kerosene) and/or setting up of independent regulator could give a fillip to the stock price.

Appendix A-1

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Ratings and Target Price History - Fundamental Research Target Analyst: Rahul Singh (covered since October 6 2005) INR Date Rating Price *275.00 275.00 *257.00 1: 5 Oct 05 2: 28 Oct 05 Chart current as 3: 31 4: 22 Jan 06 Jan 07 1L 1L 300 *240.00 *360.00 5: 11 Jul 07 *Indicates change.



Closing

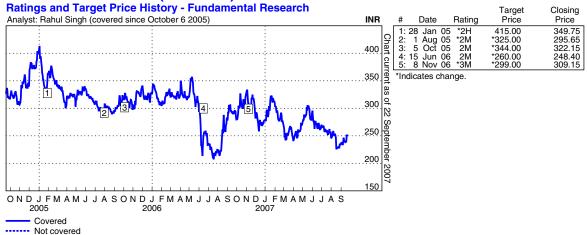
Price

268.45 238.50

230.40

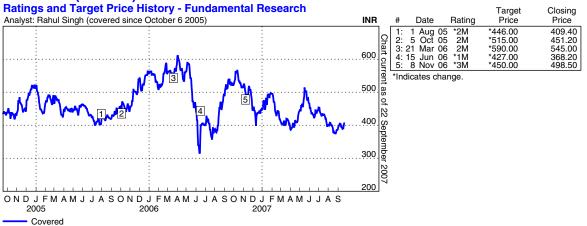
284.65

Hindustan Petroleum (HPCL.BO)



Indian Oil (IOC.BO)

---- Not covered



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