

## Industry In-Depth

7 March 2007 | 9 pages

# Indian Sugar

## Industry Decontrol Proposals: Positive, but Ambitious

- Sugar sector decontrol?** — According to press reports (*Economic Times*), the govt. has proposed significant decontrol measures for the sugar industry, including 1) Removal of support prices for cane; 2) doing away with cane area reservation; 3) doing away with levy sugar and 4) removing controls in selling (release quota). These measures, if implemented, will significantly alter the nature of the industry
- Industry dynamics could alter** — Decontrol proposals, if implemented, could have far-reaching consequences on the industry dynamics, driving consolidation and benefiting larger players like BJH (BJHN.BO - Rs164.25; 1M) and BRCM (BACH.BO - Rs59.50; 1M). Removal of levy sugar and support prices for cane could improve overall profitability for the industry and lend margin stability in sugar price down-cycles.
- Proposals seem ambitious** — While the suggestions mooted are favorable to the industry, we believe that implementation could still be long way off. We believe that removal of cane area reservation and doing away with cane support prices may be difficult to implement in entirety, as these would have the most far-reaching and direct implications for incumbent mills/farmers, who could oppose such moves
- Price outlook** — North Indian sugar prices have recovered slightly over the last 2-3 weeks. Prices in North India currently range between Rs14.5-Rs15/kg. We expect prices to remain at current levels till the crushing season concludes in May, after which sugar prices could recover slightly. We assume sugar price of Rs16/kg into our FY07E-FY08E earnings estimates for BJH and BRCM.

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**Figure 1. Sugar Valuation Summary**

Company	Target (Rs)	P/E (x) FY07E	P/E (x) FY08E	P/BV (x) FY07E	P/BV (x) FY08E	ROE (%) FY07E	DPS (Rs) FY07E	Yield (%) FY07E
Bajaj Hind	300.0	14.3	7.2	1.5	1.3	11.2	0.8	0.5
Balrampur Chini	107.0	14.9	6.7	1.6	1.3	11.1	0.7	1.1

Source: Company Reports and Citigroup Investment Research

See Appendix A-1 for Analyst Certification and important disclosures.

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## Potential sugar sector decontrol, positive but ambitious

According to newspaper reports (*Economic Times*, 7 March), the government is considering significant decontrol measures for the Indian sugar industry. According to the report, the proposal to decontrol the sugar industry, mooted by the food minister, is being circulated among various ministries for comments. It is expected to be placed before an empowered group of ministers shortly. The key changes that have been proposed include 1) removal of support prices for cane; 2) doing away with cane area reservation; 3) doing away with levy sugar and; 4) removing controls in selling (release control mechanism). We believe that these measures, if implemented, will significantly alter the dynamics of the Indian sugar industry, drive consolidation and improve the overall profitability for the industry. However, these proposals seem too ambitious to us and implementing them in entirety would be challenging. While removing sale quotas and doing away with levy sugar are relatively easy to implement, we believe that removing support prices for cane and doing away with cane area reservation would be a challenging task. This is because incumbent manufacturers, especially smaller players, are likely to oppose de-reservation of captive cane areas. Also, minimum support price for cane will be difficult to withdraw without farmer opposition. Another hurdle is that besides the Center, States also set support prices for cane, and states may continue to do so, despite the central government freeing up cane pricing. We enumerate below the key changes that have been proposed, potential implications for the Industry and our views on implementation potential.

- 1. Withdrawal of minimum support price to cane farmers and allowing farmers to undertake contract farming:** The sugarcane control order of 1966 provides for fixing a minimum price (MSP) for sugarcane to be paid. Different prices may be fixed for different areas, for different qualities, or for different varieties of sugarcane. The order also regulates the distribution and movement of sugarcane. Cane area is fixed for each factory according to its crushing capacity, etc., and cane grown in the area is reserved exclusively for the factories operating in that area. The government has also fixed a mandatory distance of 15kms to be observed between two sugar manufacturing facilities. We believe that proposed changes would require repealing the sugarcane control order. This order, if repealed, will have a significant impact on the industry dynamics. Cane price will become linked to the sugar price cycle/industry-demand supply dynamics. Also, weaker mills will risk losing cane to larger players, with capability to pay higher prices for cane. Broadly, these measures could drive a rapid consolidation of the industry and would improve the overall profitability. However, we believe that the chances of blanket withdrawal of minimum support price for cane are almost negligible, given that most other crops assure such minimum support. In addition, farmers are likely to oppose any such move. Finally, state governments also fix their own support prices, which tend to override the central government's fixed prices.
- 2. Withdrawal of levy sugar:** The government currently has the right to buy 10% of each mill's sugar production for its public distribution system at a pre-determined price that tends to be less than the market price, and depress profitability. It has been proposed that levy sugar be done away with and that the government stops buying sugar at subsidized prices. However, it has also been proposed that the government builds up a buffer for its public distribution system from the open market, partly to be funded by an increase in excise on sugar. Over the years, levy sugar percentage

has been brought down from 70% to 10%, and we believe that there is a reasonable possibility of abolishing levy sugar. This should bode well for overall profitability of sugar manufacturers.

3. **Abolishing release control mechanism:** It has also been proposed that the sugar release control mechanism be dismantled. The release control mechanism determines how much each sugar mill can sell every month. Dismantling the release control mechanism will allow mills to sell sugar freely. This could benefit large players with balance sheet strength to be able to hold on to inventories and tide over near-term price weakness.

## Near-term sugar price outlook

Sugar prices in North India, which had slid to Rs14/kg in February, have recovered slightly to Rs14.5-Rs15/kg. We expect prices to remain at current levels till the crushing season concludes in May. After the conclusion of the crushing season, we expect supply pressure from small manufacturers to ease and expect a slight pickup in prices, to Rs16/kg. Our current earnings estimates for our sugar stock coverage universe assumes Rs16/kg price for FY07E and FY08E. We enumerate below sensitivity to earnings on sugar price changes for BJH and BRCM.

**Figure 2. Balrampur Earnings Sensitivity to Sugar Prices**

Realization (Rs./ Ton)	FY07E		FY08E	
	Profit (Rs Mn)	% Divergence	Profit (Rs Mn)	% Divergence
12,000	(1,375)	(230.1)	(929)	(139.5)
13,000	(767)	(172.5)	(108)	(104.6)
14,000	(159)	(115.0)	712	(69.7)
15,000	449	(57.5)	1,532	(34.9)
<b>16,000</b>	<b>1,057</b>	-	<b>2,352</b>	-
17,000	1,665	57.5	3,173	34.9
18,000	2,273	115.0	3,993	69.7

Source: Company Reports and Citigroup Investment Research

**Figure 3. Bajaj Hindusthan Earnings Sensitivity to Sugar Prices**

Realization (Rs./ Ton)	FY07E		FY08E	
	Profit (Rs Mn)	% Divergence	Profit (Rs Mn)	% Divergence
12,000	(2,046)	(226.5)	(2,131)	(166.0)
13,000	(1,130)	(169.9)	(791)	(124.5)
14,000	(214)	(113.3)	550	(83.0)
15,000	701	(56.6)	1,891	(41.5)
<b>16,000</b>	<b>1,617</b>	-	<b>3,232</b>	-
17,000	2,533	56.6	4,572	41.5
18,000	3,448	113.3	5,913	83.0

Source: Company Reports and Citigroup Investment Research

## BJH and BRCM trading below replacement cost

We maintain Buy ratings on BJH and BRCM. Our price target for BJH is Rs300 and that for BRCM is Rs107. The stocks trade at a discount to replacement cost to assets, which should provide some downside support. We enumerate below replacement cost analysis for BJH and BRCM.

**Figure 4. BJH – Replacement Cost**

	Capacity (FY08E)	Replacement cost per unit (Rs)	Replacement cost (Rs Million)
Sugar (TCD)	136000	300000	40800
Alcohol (KLPD)	800	3500000	2800
Co-generated Power (MW)	96	40000000	3840
MDF			2400
Total Replacement cost (Rs million)			49840
Total Debt (Rsm)			15000
Current Market Cap (Rs million)			24004
<b>Discount to replacement cost (%)</b>			<b>22%</b>

Source: Company reports; Citigroup Investment Research

**Figure 5. BRCM – Replacement Cost**

	Capacity (FY08E)	Replacement cost per unit (Rs)	Replacement cost (Rs Million)
Sugar (TCD)	73000	300000	21900
Alcohol (KLPD)	420	3500000	1470
Co-gen Power (MW)	74	40000000	2960
Total Replacement cost (Rs million)			26330
Total Debt (Rsm)			5000
Current Market Cap (Rs million)			15849
<b>Discount to replacement cost (%)</b>			<b>21%</b>

Source: Company reports; Citigroup Investment Research

## Bajaj Hindusthan (BJHN.BO - Rs164.25; 1M)

### Investment Summary

We maintain our Buy rating on BJH. The stock has corrected sharply following decline in domestic and global sugar prices and now trades at a significant discount to replacement cost of assets (almost 50% discount, which we believe are close to buy out valuations. We believe that domestic spot sugar prices have bottomed out and expect a pick up in 2008E sugar season.

BJH is the largest sugar manufacturer in India and among the ten largest globally. The company's experience in the sugar business spans 70 years. Its manufacturing plant is in UP with cane crushing capacity of 56,300 TCD, which is likely to increase to 136,000 TCD by FY08. BJH also manufactures industrial alcohol/ethanol, with capacity of 320 KLPD, which is planned to be expanded to 800KLPD by FY08. The company plans to sell some of its surplus power from its co-generation unit. Surplus capacity is likely to be 90MW by FY07E.

### Valuations

Our target price of Rs300 is based on an FY08E P/E of 13x. We maintain our c.15% premium to the global peer group, accounting for BJH's superior growth profile and given that demand for sugar in India is growing at 2x the global average. BJH looks set to emerge as a strong industry leader by 2008, with global-scale capacities, a strong balance sheet and a richer product mix.

Further, we expect BJH to expand beyond its already stated expansion plans, and we do not rule out a sizeable international acquisition. With its leadership position likely to gain further strength and its capital-efficiency ratios high, we believe BJH should trade at a premium to the global average.

We are using P/E as our primary valuation methodology given the strong visibility of earnings. We believe benchmarking BJH against its historical valuations is not relevant given that the stock has historically been illiquid. Over a cycle, a more liquid name such as Balrampur Chini has traded in a P/E range of 4-15x.

Our 13x target multiple is at a discount to the historical peak cycle multiple of 15x, factoring in a weakening sugar price cycle. On an EV/EBITDA basis, we ascribe a target multiple of 7.0-7.5x, at par with the global peer group average on a one-year forward basis. This gives us a target price of Rs285. We use EV/EBITDA given the commodity nature of the sugar business and BJH's large debt to fund growth.

## Risks

Although our quantitative risk-rating system, which tracks 260-day historical share price volatility, assigns a High Risk to the stock, we rate it as Medium Risk given that the company has successfully completed its first phase of capacity expansion. The sugar industry in general and BHL in particular, faces significant risks, some of which are structural in nature. The key downside risks

include: (1) regulations and the possibility of government intervention in an industry with little pricing power; (2) sugarcane output is governed by various agro-climatic factors; an adverse climate could lead to crop failures, affecting raw-material availability; and (3) specific to BJH is execution risk, as the company is aggressively expanding capacity. If the impact of these risks is greater than we expect, the share price will likely have difficulty reaching our target price.

## Balrampur Chini (BACH.BO - Rs59.50; 1M)

### Investment Thesis

We have a Buy rating on BRCM. The company looks well positioned to benefit from the strong growth in sugar demand in India (+4%, 2x global demand).

Being a leader in the sector, it should benefit from consolidation while small players become uncompetitive in the longer term. The company is also undertaking significant capacity expansion. BRCM benefited from the recent sugar upcycle. Longer term, continued demand growth should lead to India turning into a net importer of sugar and companies such as BRCM should benefit. The current valuations of BRCM, (36% discount to replacement cost) provide another opportunity to accumulate the shares.

### Valuation

Our target price of Rs107 is based on 12x FY08E P/E. We maintain our 10% discount to the market leader BJH. We are using P/E as our primary valuation methodology given BRCM's strong earnings visibility. Expected capacity expansion drives our earnings estimates for BRCM; we expect volume-driven earnings growth over the next three years. On a one-year forward EV/EBITDA basis, we ascribe BRCM a multiple of 6.5x-7.0x, in-line with the global peer group average of 7.0x-7.5x. This gives us a fair value range of Rs100, which

supports our P/E-based target price. We are using EV/EBITDA as our second valuation methodology, given the commoditized nature of the sugar business and BRCM's large debt position (in order to fund growth).

## Risks

Although our quantitative risk-rating system, which tracks 260-day historical share price volatility, assigns a High Risk to the stock, we rate BRCM as Medium Risk given that the company has successfully completed part of its capacity expansion and has raised capital for the remaining capex. We believe execution and financial risks stand mitigated to a large extent. The following risks could impede the stock from reaching our target price:

- Regulations and the possibility of government intervention in pricing in an industry that has little pricing power.
- Sugarcane output is governed by various agro-climatic factors. An adverse climate could lead to crop failures, affecting raw-material availability.
- The company is aggressively expanding capacity and any delay could hurt its near-term profitability.
- BRCM is looking at investing in power generation, which is a highly regulated industry. Any changes in government regulations could hurt business prospects.

## Appendix A-1

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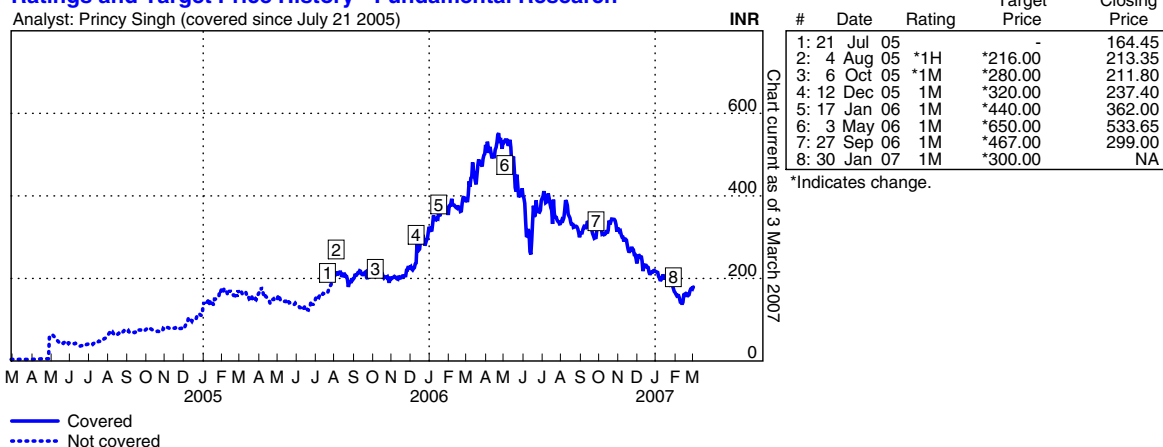
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##### Ratings and Target Price History - Fundamental Research

Analyst: Princy Singh (covered since July 21 2005)



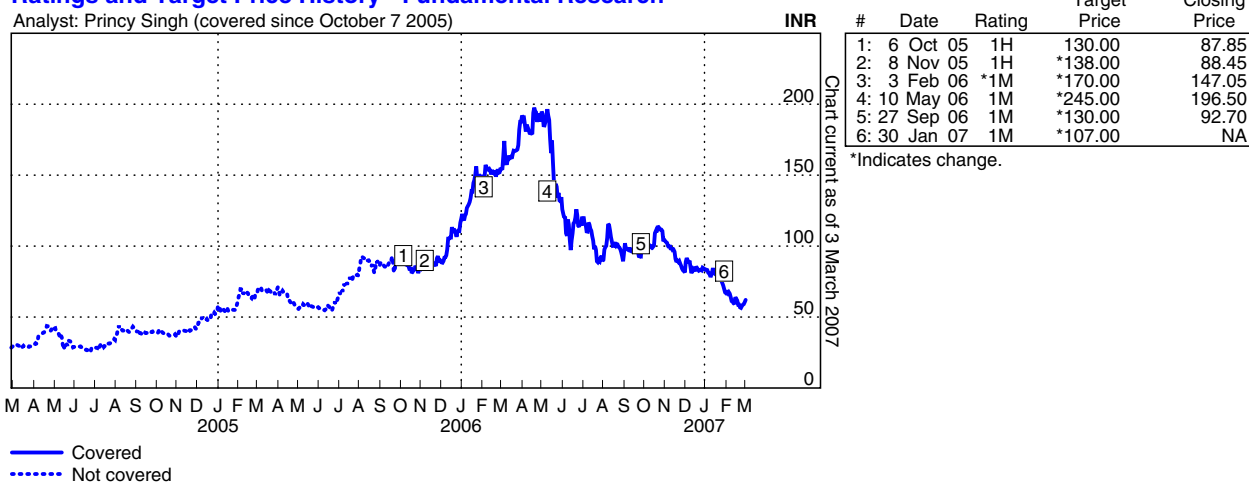
— Covered

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##### Ratings and Target Price History - Fundamental Research

Analyst: Princy Singh (covered since October 7 2005)



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