**COMPANY UPDATE** | Sector: Energy

# **Chennai Petroleum Corp Ltd**

## Refining Margins Reflate; Alpha in the making

The refining upcycle that began unfolding in Q1FY26 has entered a more defined and sustained phase, offering a compelling tactical window for select standalone refiners. While our June note ("Refining Upcycle favors CPCL and MRPL") had flagged the early signs of a margin reset driven by geopolitical risk premia, surging diesel cracks, and disrupted Atlantic Basin supply chains, the latest data now validates that trend—underscoring both its strength and stickiness. Importantly, these dynamics have evolved from being just risk-led spikes to structurally tight fundamentals across middle distillates, with diesel inventories still ~20-25% below historical levels in key markets and cracks reaching USD20/bbl. This environment, coupled with still-subdued Brent (~USD70/bbl), is driving one of the most profitable refining backdrops since FY23. We believe that Chennai Petro (CPCL) is best placed amongst the Indian refining space, a constant diesel RSP for OMCs and better refining cracks has led to the gross marketing margins correct from ~Rs9.6/ltr in Q1FY26 to ~Rs5.8/ltr today.

### **Indian Standalone Refiners in Sweet Spot**

The Indian standalone refiners are poised to benefit meaningfully in Q1FY26 and further in Q2FY26 as global product cracks, especially diesel and ATF have surged following escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. The diesel cracks have risen sharply breaching USD20/bbl, driven by concerns over disruption to exports from the Gulf, and tightening inventories in the West.

Given the average Indian product slate consists of 45%/16%/8% of Diesel/Gasoline/ATF, a USD1/bbl delta in each result in an impact of USD/bbl 0.5/0.2/0.1 for the Indian refiners. The trending Singapore GRMs are ~USD4.5/bbl while the Indian refiners are making over USD10/bbl of GRMs.

## **Diesel Market Strength Reinforces Margin Upside**

Global diesel markets remain structurally tight, reinforcing the strength in refining margins. As of July, U.S. distillate inventories are still 20–25% below the 5-year average, with sharp draws reported through late June and early July. European and Asian diesel cracks remain elevated, with prompt spreads crossing USD20/bbl; levels last seen during the Iran–Israel conflict in June. This strength is being driven by resilient demand, disrupted Atlantic Basin supply, continued east-west dislocations and labor strikes in Europe limiting production. The diesel upcycle remains the central profit driver for complex refiners with middle distillate exposure.

Diesel cracks are higher despite lower crude prices, the disconnect arises because diesel crack spreads reflect refinery margins and supply-demand balances for refined products, which can remain tight and support strong crack prices even when crude oil prices fall. Factors supporting are – refinery closures and reduced capacity growth, strong summer demand with low inventories – supply declines outpacing demand, the net refinery capacity growth remains below demand growth globally, making existing refinery output more valuable.

### **CPCL: Well-Positioned to Capture Upside**

CPCL stands out tactically among Indian refiners due to its slate profile, cost-efficient crude sourcing, and cleaner operating structure. As per our estimates for Q1FY26, CPCL could report a core GRM of USD9.05/bbl (reported USD7.35) despite inventory losses. With over 30% crude sourced from discounted Russian barrels and no downstream marketing burden, CPCL offers one of the highest operating leverages to the refining margin cycle. Our QTD estimate for 2QFY26 GRMs at USD10.5/bbl (17days of July) suggests further earnings re-rating potential. We project FY26/FY27 GRMs at USD/bbl 7.4/6.9; a FCF yield above 14% and see room for a dividend payout exceeding the mandated 30%, implying a yield of over 6% at CMP.



Reco	:	BUY
СМР	:	Rs 765
Target Price	:	Rs 1,100
Potential Return	:	+43.8%

#### Stock data (as on Jul 21, 2025)

Nifty	25,056
52 Week h/I (Rs)	1275 / 433
Market cap (Rs/USD mn)	111274 / 1290
Outstanding Shares (mn)	149
6m Avg t/o (Rs mn):	1,390
Div yield (%):	0.7
Bloomberg code:	MRL IN
NSE code:	CHENNPETRO

### Stock performance



Shareholding pattern (As of Jun'25 end	Sharehold	ing pattern	(As of Jun'25	end)
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Promoter	67.3%
FII+DII	11.3%
Others	21.4%

## $\Delta$ in stance

(1-Yr)	New	Old
Rating	BUY	BUY
Target Price	1,100	900

### $\Delta$ in estimates

(1-Yr)	FY25	FY26e	FY27e
EPS (New)	11.7	134.2	112.8
EPS (Old)	11.7	75.8	92.1
% Change	-	77.0	22.5

### **Financial Summary**

(Do hn)	FY25	FY26E	FY27E
(Rs bn)	F125	FIZOE	FYZ/E
Revenue	593.6	542.9	549.0
YoY Growth	(10.6)	(8.5)	1.1
EBIDTA	10.2	35.8	32.3
OPM %	1.7	6.6	5.9
PAT	2.4	20.0	16.8
YoY Growth	(91.3)	730.3	(15.9)
ROE	2.9	23.3	17.3
EPS	11.7	134.2	112.8
P/E	65.6	5.7	6.8
BV	533.1	617.3	688.1
EV/EBITDA	13.9	3.8	4.0

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### Diesel inventory & crack trends - July 2025 update

### Inventory trends

- U.S. distillate (diesel + heating oil) stocks remain sharply depressed, hovering around 20-25% below the five-year average as of early July.
- API data showed a steep draw of 3.5 mbbl in the last week of June 2025, reinforcing tight global stock conditions.
- In PADD-1 (U.S. East Coast), low-sulfur diesel inventories stand ~21.5 mbbl below the 2019– 23 lows, creating a structurally backwardated market.

Diesel crack spreads: Market commentary as per few articles as of July 2025 indicates that diesel cracks are up and "prompt spread" (difference between near month and the next month after that) is at its highest since October 2022, indicating a strong premium for near-term deliveries. This is exacerbated by an east-west arbitrage spread that has widened to discounts, similar to levels last seen during the June Iran-Israel tensions—highlighting robust Asian demand and constraints in Atlantic Basin supply.

### **CPCL** - Stronger refining cracks boosting profitability

CPCL stands to benefit tactically from the recent surge in refining margins, driven by geopolitical risk premium on crude (post Israel-Iran escalation) and resilient diesel cracks. With Brent ~70/bbl, near-term GRMs may remain elevated, supporting earnings in H1FY26. The company sources over 30% of its crude requirements from Russia at a discount, thereby boosting GRMs, one of the highest amongst Indian refiners at a single location. The benchmark Singapore GRM and the company's GRM are trending higher than their last 7-year averages, supported by stronger demand, reduced supply, and lower stocks.

With our calculated QTD Q2FY26 (17days of July) GRMs of USD10.5/bbl and possible no inventory losses, the extrapolated EBITDA could be at Rs15.2bn with an EPS of over Rs66/share, resulting in a further re-rating of our FY26 numbers.

### MRPL's Q1FY26 Print not reflective of sector trends

MRPL's Q1FY26 results, released on Friday 18-Jul'25, reported a GRM of USD3.88/bbl, significantly below expectations. It's important to contextualize the reported GRMs before drawing comparisons across refiners. MRPL GRMs are not a right indicator for other Indian refining companies, their GRMs were impacted due to shutdowns of their high value middle distillate units in Q1, normalised GRMs could have been USD7-8/bbl. Expect better GRMs to be report by CPCL and OMCs (BPCL > HPCL > IOCL) based on their refinery utilizations.

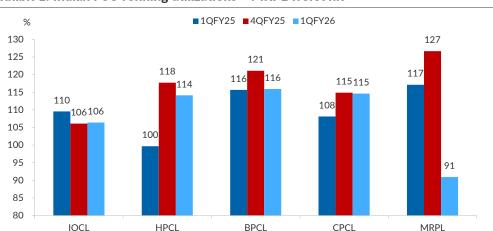


Exhibit 1: Indian PSU refining utilizations - MRPL worst hit

Source: PPAC, YES Sec

## **VIEW & VALUATION**

### BUY with a TP of Rs 1,100/sh.

High GRM sensitivity: a USD1/bbl change in GRM changes EBITDA by Rs 7.5bn. Declared dividend of Rs 5/share in FY25 (0.7% dividend yield on CMP), 6.5/5.5% FY26e/27e, would be key for shareholders. The BV/share for FY26e/27e: Rs 617/688, debt on books is towards working capital requirements. We project FY26/FY27 GRMs at USD/bbl 7.4/6.9; a FCF yield above 14% and see room for a dividend payout exceeding the mandated 30%.

As per our FY27e BV, the stock is currently trading at 1.1x P/BV which is below its long-term trading average. The increase in OCF and subdued capex would lead to a decent FCF, but as per our expectations we could witness a healthy FCF compared to its history. The expected FCF yield for FY27 is at 14.4% and a Net Debt:Equity of 0.2/0.1x for FY26/FY27.

At CMP, the stock trades at 3.8x/4x FY26e/27e EV/EBITDA and 1.2x/1.1x P/BV. On our FY27 numbers we assign a multiple of 1.6x P/BV (implied 5.5x EV/EBITDA) to arrive a target of Rs 1,100/share with a BUY Rating.

**Key risks:** Lower GRM environment, change in crude prices and inventory losses, lower returns from the investments, adverse government policy.

**Exhibit 2: Valuation table** 

EV/EBITDA	FY27E
Book Value/share (Rs)	688
Multiple (x)	1.6
VPS (Rs)	1,100

### **CPCL Sensitivity to GRMs**

**Exhibit 3: EBITDA sensitivity to GRM** 

Refining	capacity	EBITDA (Rs bn)					
utilizati	on (%)	78.0	88.0	98.0	108.0	118.0	128.0
=	3.9	7.1	8.0	9.0	9.9	10.8	11.7
qq /	4.9	12.5	14.1	15.7	17.4	19.0	20.6
SD	5.9	17.9	20.2	22.5	24.8	27.1	29.4
GRMs (USD / bbl)	6.9	23.4	26.3	29.3	32.3	35.3	38.3
RM	7.9	28.8	32.4	36.1	39.8	43.5	47.2
U	8.9	34.2	38.5	42.9	47.3	51.7	56.1

Source: Company, YES Sec

Exhibit 4: Target price sensitivity to GRM

Refining	g capacity	Target (Rs / sh)					
utiliza	tion (%)	78.0	88.0	98.0	108.0	118.0	128.0
=	3.9	(1)	39	79	118	158	198
qq /	4.9	235	305	375	446	516	586
SD,	5.9	471	572	672	773	873	974
s (U	6.9	708	838	969	1,100	1,231	1,361
GRMs (USD / bbl)	7.9	944	1,105	1,266	1,427	1,588	1,749
U	8.9	1,180	1,372	1,563	1,754	1,946	2,137

Source: Company, YES Sec



# **FINANCIALS**

**Exhibit 5: Income statement** 

V/ 04 M /D	EV00	EV0.4	FVOE	- F)/0/F	EV075
Y/e 31 Mar (Rs mn)	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26E	FY27E
Revenue	767,347	663,854	593,560	542,889	548,958
Total Expense	710,375	619,099	583,402	507,113	516,629
Operating Profit	56,972	44,755	10,158	35,776	32,328
Other Income	151	133	435	566	735
Depreciation	5,735	6,056	6,067	6,419	6,949
EBIT	51,389	38,832	4,526	29,923	26,114
Interest	3,302	2,233	2,445	3,220	3,665
Extraordinary Item	-	-	-	-	-
PBT	48,087	36,599	2,081	26,703	22,450
Tax	12,749	9,486	346	6,721	5,651
PAT	35,338	27,113	1,735	19,982	16,799
Adj. PAT	35,338	27,113	1,735	19,982	16,799
Eps	237.3	182.1	11.7	134.2	112.8

## **Exhibit 6: Balance sheet**

Exhibit of Balance sheet	· ·				
Y/e 31 Mar (Rs mn)	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26E	FY27E
Equity capital	1,489	1,489	1,489	1,489	1,489
Reserves	61,321	84,441	77,896	90,432	100,977
Net worth	62,810	85,930	79,385	91,921	102,466
Debt	42,596	27,859	31,174	41,174	41,174
Deferred tax liab (net)	7,646	8,143	8,815	8,815	8,815
Capital Employed	113,051	121,932	119,374	141,910	152,454
Fixed assets	79,680	77,161	75,330	79,109	82,245
Investments	120	120	120	120	120
Net working capital	33,252	44,651	43,924	62,682	70,090
Inventories	59,736	78,309	64,931	64,025	65,246
Sundry debtors	2,987	4,616	1,948	3,123	3,158
Cash & Bank Balance	86	943	3,753	20,465	26,935
Other current assets	15,812	19,886	21,887	21,767	21,782
Sundry creditors	30,071	42,825	31,643	29,747	30,080
Other liabilities	15,297	16,276	16,952	16,952	16,952
Application of Funds	113,051	121,932	119,374	141,910	152,454



**Exhibit 7: Cash flow statement** 

Y/e 31 Mar (Rs mn)	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26E	FY27E
PBT	48,081	36,599	2,081	26,703	22,450
Depreciation & amortization	5,726	6,050	5,980	6,419	6,949
Interest expense	3,302	2,233	2,445	3,220	3,665
(Inc)/Dec in working capital	(151)	(132)	(357)	-	-
Tax paid	8,541	(8,824)	3,079	(2,046)	(938)
Less: Interest/Dividend Income Received	10,074	9,185	(83)	(6,721)	(5,651)
Other operating Cash Flow	(18,082)	(18,168)	378	-	-
Cash flow from operating activities	57,490	26,943	13,524	27,575	26,475
Capital expenditure	(4,178)	(6,027)	(6,855)	(10,198)	(10,086)
Inc/(Dec) in investments	151	132	357	-	-
Add: Interest/Dividend Income Received	1	3	3	-	-
Cash flow from investing activities	(4,025)	(5,892)	(6,495)	(10,198)	(10,086)
Inc/(Dec) in share capital				-	-
Inc/(Dec) in debt	(48,886)	(14,814)	5,351	10,000	-
Interest Paid	(4,352)	(2,227)	(2,351)	(3,220)	(3,665)
Dividend Paid	(298)	(4,021)	(8,190)	(7,446)	(6,254)
Others	-	-	-	-	-
Cash flow from financing activities	(53,536)	(21,061)	(5,191)	(665)	(9,919)
Net cash flow	(71)	(11)	1,838	16,712	6,471

## **Exhibit 8: Du-pont analysis**

Y/e 31 Mar (Rs mn)	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26E	FY27E
Tax burden (x)	0.8	0.8	1.2	0.7	0.7
Interest burden (x)	0.9	0.9	0.5	0.9	0.9
EBIT margin (x)	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.0
Asset turnover (x)	4.6	3.9	3.4	3.0	2.8
Financial leverage (x)	3.7	2.3	2.1	2.1	2.0
RoE (%)	82.5	37.1	2.9	23.3	17.3

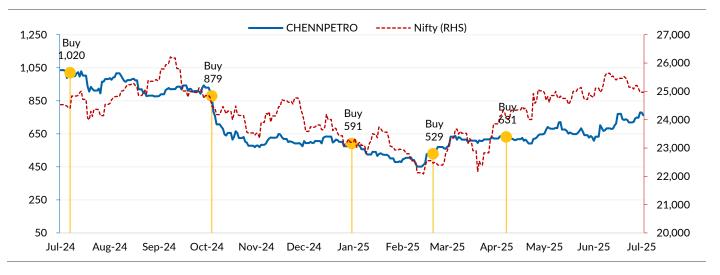


**Exhibit 9: Ratio analysis** 

Y/e 31 Mar	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26E	FY27E
Growth matrix (%)					
Revenue growth	76.9	(13.5)	(10.6)	(8.5)	1.1
Op profit growth	108.6	(21.4)	(77.3)	252.2	(9.6)
EBIT growth	129.0	(24.4)	(88.3)	561.1	(12.7)
Net profit growth	163.2	(23.3)	(93.6)	730.3	(15.9)
Profitability ratios (%)					
OPM	7.4	6.7	1.7	6.6	5.9
EBIT margin	6.7	5.8	0.8	5.5	4.8
Net profit margin	4.6	4.1	0.3	3.7	3.1
RoCE	43.0	33.1	3.8	22.9	17.7
RoE	77.9	36.5	2.1	23.3	17.3
RoA	21.3	16.0	1.0	11.2	8.7
Per share ratios					
EPS	237.3	182.1	11.7	134.2	112.8
Dividend per share	27.0	55.0	5.0	50.0	42.0
Cash EPS	27.8	222.7	52.4	177.3	159.5
Book value per share	421.8	577.1	533.1	617.3	688.1
Valuation ratios					
P/E	1.0	3.5	54.1	5.7	6.8
P/CEPS	0.9	2.8	12.0	4.3	4.8
P/B	0.6	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.1
EV/EBIDTA	1.4	2.7	11.9	3.8	4.0
Payout (%)					
Dividend payout	11.4	30.2	42.9	37.3	37.2
Tax payout	26.5	25.9	16.6	25.2	25.2
Liquidity ratios					
Debtor days	1.3	2.1	2.0	2.1	2.1
Inventory days	36.7	41.7	47.2	48.0	48.0
Creditor days	14.9	20.0	22.9	20.0	20.0



## **Recommendation Tracker**





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In adopting Rule 15a-6, the SEC sought "to facilitate access to foreign markets by U.S. institutional investors through foreign broker-dealers and the research that they provide, consistent with maintaining the safeguards afforded by broker-dealer registration." [Rule 15a-6 Adopting Release at 54 FR 30013; see also Registration Requirements for Foreign Broker-Dealers, Exchange Act Release No. 25801 (June 14, 1988), 53 FR 23645 (June 23, 1988)].



#### **DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST**

Name of the Research Analyst: Harshraj Aggarwal, Uvais Khatri

The analyst hereby certifies that opinion expressed in this research report accurately reflect his or her personal opinion about the subject securities and no part of his or her compensation was, is or will be directly or indirectly related to the specific recommendation and opinion expressed in this research report.

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Analysts assign ratings to the stocks according to the expected upside/downside relative to the current market price and the estimated target price. Depending on the expected returns, the recommendations are categorized as mentioned below. The performance horizon is 12 to 18 months unless specified and the target price is defined as the analysts' valuation for a stock. No benchmark is applicable to the ratings mentioned in this report.

BUY: Upside greater than 20% over 12 months

ADD: Upside between 10% to 20% over 12 months

**NEUTRAL:** Upside between 0% to 10% over 12 months

**REDUCE:** Downside between 0% to -10% over 12 months

SELL: Downside greater than -10% over 12 months

NOT RATED / UNDER REVIEW

Analyst signature Analyst signature

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