Mint, Delhi, 24/12/2025
Page No: 11, Size: 11.48cm × 17.86cm

HMEL to invest in refinery expansion

HPCL Mittal Energy Ltd (HMEL) will invest ₹2,600 crore to expand operations at its Guru Gobind Singh Refinery in Bathinda, setting up polypropylene downstream units and fine chemical projects, the firm said Tuesday. HMEL managing director and CEO Prabh Das said apart from producing fuels such as petrol, diesel and gas, the refinery is now planning to further expand industrial activities through fine chemical projects in Bathinda.

Das said the refinery has positioned Punjab as a key polypropylene manufacturing hub, meeting nearly 14% of India's total polypropylene demand. He added that the refinery has operated without interruption for several years and that HMEL now plans to broaden its industrial footprint beyond fuels into fine chemicals.

The refinery, commissioned in 2011 and spread across about 2,000 acres, generates an annual turnover of around ₹90,000 crore. **PTI**

Statesman, Delhi, 24/12/2025
Page No: 7, Size: 30.93cm × 19.34cm

Denying fuel won't give us clean air

SHREY MADAAN

From December 18 onwards, a Delhi commuter may pull into a petrol pump as usual, only to be silently refused fuel: no argument, no explanation, no warning. A camera will scan the vehicle, detect a missing Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificate, and the nozzle simply won't turn on. In the midst of a pollution emergency, Delhi has opted for automation over judgment, restriction over reform.

The intention is understandable. Delhi's air is dangerous, and vehicular emissions are part of the problem. But policies that look efficient on paper can still fail in practice, especially when they ignore how people actually move, work, and live in a city of over 30 million.

PUC-based fuel denial assumes three things: that PUC certificates accurately reflect real-world emissions, that compliance is easy and accessible, and that people denied fuel have viable alternatives. None of these assumptions holds.

PUC testing in India is widely recognized as inconsistent. Certificates are issued based on brief, stationary tests that fail to capture emissions from congestion, idling, poor fuel quality, or engine stress in real driving conditions. A car can pass a PUC test and still pollute heavily in stop-and-go traffic. Using such a blunt proxy to determine access to fuel risks penalising formality rather than pollution.

Then there is the issue of scale. Over eight lakh vehicle owners in Delhi reportedly lack valid PUC certificates. Giving them one day to comply is not environmental urgency, it is administrative shock therapy. For gig workers, delivery drivers, tradespeople, and small business owners, a vehicle is not a lifestyle choice; it is a livelihood. Denying fuel does not clean the air if it simply pushes economic activity into chaos or informality.

This approach also confuses enforcement with outcomes. If denying fuel were enough, Delhi's air would have improved long ago. The city already cycles through GRAP restrictions, construction bans, work-from-home mandates, and vehicle limits every winter. Yet the crisis returns, because the underlying system has not changed.

A useful comparison comes from cities that reduced traffic emissions not by sudden cut-offs, but by implementing gradual reforms. Tokyo reduced vehicle emissions not through blanket bans, but by removing dependence on personal vehicles. Extensive and efficient public transport, strict inspection standards and long-term planning reduced traffic organically. Restrictions were embedded within a system that already worked for consumers. Cleaner air followed not from sudden cut-offs, but from sustained investment in alternatives.

Delhi, by contrast, is still catching up. Bus availability remains insufficient. Last-mile connectivity is unreliable. EV adoption is encouraged rhetorically but constrained by charging gaps and policy uncertainty. Instead of making cleaner choices easier, policy keeps narrowing choices altogether.

There is also a risk policymakers underestimate: displacement. When compliance becomes unpredictable, behaviour does not disappear; it adapts. Vehicles refuel outside city limits. Certificates become a paperwork game. Pollution shifts rather than shrinks. Clean air cannot be enforced like a toll booth.

None of this argues for leniency toward polluters. It argues for smarter design. If the goal is to reduce polluting vehicles, then invest first in mobility alternatives, upgrade testing to reflect real-world emissions, and use pricing and incentives that reward cleaner behavior. Enforcement should reinforce reform, not replace it.

Automation can deny fuel. Only policy can deliver clean air. Delhi needs less autopilot and more consideration of how consumers actually navigate the city. If Delhi wants cleaner air, it should start by making buses and metros frequent, PUC testing credible, and electric vehicles cheaper, not by turning petrol pumps into punishment booths.

(The writer is Indian Policy Associate, Consumer Choice Center.)

Mint, Delhi, 24/12/2025
Page No: 1, Size: 10.00cm × 31.94cm

mint primer

How govt's tariff reset could lower CNG, PNG prices

BY RITURAJ BARUAH

Millions of CNG and domestic PNG users could pay less for gas as the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) simplifies transportation tariffs under "One Nation, One Grid, One Tariff". *Mint* looks at what the change means for users and city gas distribution.

REUTERS

1 What tariff changes are we looking at?

From 1 January, transportation charges will be ₹54 per million British thermal units (MMBtu) for distances up to 300 km, and ₹102.86 per MMBtu beyond 300 km. However, all CNG and domestic PNG consumers will be charged the Zone 1 rate of ₹54 per MMBtu, irrespective of distance. This replaces the 2023 tariff regime, under which pipeline charges were split into three slabs: ₹42 for up to 200 km, ₹80 for 200–1,200 km, and ₹107 for distances beyond 1,200 km. Transportation currently accounts for about 9% of the overall cost of natural gas procured by city gas distribution (CGD) companies.

2 How will the move impact consumers?

The revised tariff structure will result in nearly 50% lower transportation charges for consumers located beyond 300 km. With uniform transportation tariffs across the country, retail consumers are expected to directly benefit through lower CNG and PNG prices, according to PNGRB. PNGRB estimates the revised tariffs will reduce CGD transportation costs by around ₹1,000 crore annually, translating into lower delivered prices for consumers—CNG by ₹1.25-2.50 per kg and domestic PNG by ₹0.90-1.80 per standard cubic metre (SCM).

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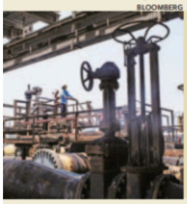


3 Why was there a need to rationalize tariff slabs?

The tariff rationalization is aimed at expanding natural gas adoption in line with the Centre's aim of raising its share in India's energy basket to 15% by 2030, from the current 6%. Regional variations in gas transportation costs had kept CNG and PNG prices uneven. PNGRB chief Anil Kumar Jain said that consumers now will pay same transport tariff across India.

4 What's been the trend in gas consumption?

In April-November of FY26, about 46,239 million standard cubic metres (mmscm) of natural gas was consumed, 6.7% lower on year. In FY25, consumption rose 6% to 71,314 mmscm on strong power sector demand. The recent slowdown was led by weaker demand from power and fertiliser segments. CGD, which accounts for 21% of gas consumption, has been resilient, growing 7% year-on-year in October, while over the past three years, PNG and CNG consumption rose at annual rates of 8% and 20%, respectively.

5 What is the outlook for the CGD segment?

India has 307 authorized geographical areas under various CGD auction rounds and a natural gas pipeline network of about 25,000 km. City gas distribution, which includes CNG and domestic PNG, is expected to be the primary driver of natural gas demand in the coming decades. CGD is projected to account for 29% of total gas consumption by 2030 and 44% by 2040. A likely rise in global gas supplies from 2028 as new facilities in the US and Qatar come on stream, could ease prices further and accelerate adoption.

Business Standard, Delhi, 24/12/2025
Page No: 9, Size: 36.83cm × 58.10cm

Caribbean crisis

US action in Venezuela threatens India's economic interests

The Trump administration's blockade and seizure of "sanctioned" oil tankers linked to Venezuela in international waters represent a new low in the United States' (US') foreign policy and raise fresh questions on the principles and ethics of Washington's recent global leadership. Done without the US Congress' approval, these actions raise fears of all-out war. The US earlier this month seized two tankers and is pursuing a third, claiming all three were linked to a dark or shadow fleet used by Venezuela, Iran, and Russia to avoid Western sanctions and ship oil mainly to China but also to India. Raising doubts about the veracity of the administration's motives, at least one of the seized vehicles does not appear on the list of official sanctions. Mr Trump's declaration that oil from the captured tankers could be sold or added to US strategic reserves adds an element of amorality to US actions.

These seizures follow similar interdictions by France and Estonia on the Russian dark fleet in neutral waters. But with Russia demonstrating that it is willing to provide military protection for its shadow fleet, and China, the major oil buyer from these countries, describing US seizures as a serious violation of international law, the potential for a global conflict has never looked closer. The US has also conducted strikes on boats that it claims were used by drug traffickers. In both his terms, Mr Trump has made no secret of his aversion for the ultra-left leaning Nicolás Maduro and desire for a regime change in Caracas. A clumsy attempt to do so in 2020 failed. Though Mr Maduro can by no means be described as a model of governance or a beacon of genuine democracy, sanctions on Venezuelan oil, the country's principal foreign-exchange earner, have crippled the economy for the past decade. Mr Trump's claim that Mr Maduro is emptying his prisons and illegally flooding the US with criminal elements and that the country is a major source of drug trafficking lacks foundation. In fact, Venezuela is known to be a minor player in the illegal drug trade, unlike neighbouring Colombia.

These ructions in the Caribbean have some impact on India. Indian refiners have been buying heavy crude oil from Venezuela since 2024 and the US sanctions, blockade, and seizures on this relatively cheap source threaten India's energy security. This apart, state-owned ONGC Videsh, the overseas arm of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), has significant investment in Venezuela's oil-rich Orinoco basin. The company has a 40 per cent stake in a joint venture for heavy oil and an 11 per cent stake in another oil field. As a result of these sanctions, ONGC Videsh has around $600 million stuck in Venezuela. Mr Maduro had agreed to transfer the operations of these fields from its state-run oil company to ONGC if the Indian corporation acquires waivers from the US. Now, war clouds hang over this process. India's exports of pharmaceutical products and textiles to Venezuela have dwindled and remain at risk owing to recent developments. Robust criticism by New Delhi of US action in Venezuela has been hamstrung by the delay in concluding a viable trade deal with Washington. But if the US sees fit to extend its policy of chase and seizure across the globe, the consequences for the Indian economy could be adverse.

Millennium Post, Delhi, 24/12/2025
Page No: 10, Size: 15.35cm × 12.06cm

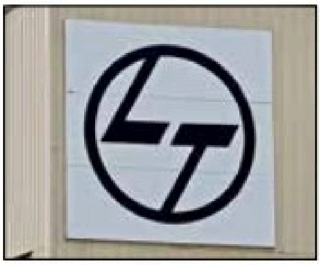
L&T bags major order from BPCL

L&T didn't disclose exact value of order, but said it falls in 'major' category, ranging between Rs 5K-10K crore

NEW DELHI: Infrastructure major Larsen & Toubro (L&T) on Tuesday said one of its verticals has bagged a "major" order from State-owned BPCL.

The order underscores L&T onshore's position as a key enabler in the sector. The order has been bagged by L&T hydrocarbon onshore business vertical (L&T Onshore).

L&T did not disclose the exact value of the order, but said it falls in the "major" category, which ranges between Rs 5,000-10,000 crore.



"The scope of work encompasses engineering, procurement, construction and commissioning of a linear low-density polyethylene/high-density polyethylene swing unit comprising two trains of 575 KTPA each, at Bina in Madhya Pradesh," the company said in a filing to BSE.

The project forms an integral part of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd's (BPCL) Bina petrochemicals and refinery expansion project which aims to set up a petrochemical complex and enhance refinery capacity.

It aligns with the Centre's 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' vision by strengthening domestic manufacturing and achieving self-sufficiency in polymer production.

"This is a major order that will not only strengthen our balance sheet but also provide impetus to our demonstrated credentials in downstream hydrocarbon EPC space," Subramanian Sarma, Deputy Managing Director & President, L&T said. MPOST

Hindustan Times, Delhi, 24/12/2025
Page No: 5, Size: 37.07cm × 31.83cm

Hindustan Times

Not just seasonal: 'No PUC, no fuel' rule will be in effect permanently

Snehil Sinha
snehil.sinha@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The "No PUC, No Fuel" policy will continue even after all anti-pollution restrictions under the Graded Response Action Plan (Grap) are lifted, the Delhi government announced on Tuesday, signalling that checks on vehicular emissions will now remain a permanent feature of enforcement in the Capital.

The decision, taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by chief minister Rekha Gupta, makes it mandatory for vehicle owners to possess a valid Pollution Under Control Certificate (PUCC) to refuel, irrespective of prevailing air quality levels. Officials said the policy would serve as a long-term compliance mechanism to curb vehicular emissions, which remain one of the biggest contributors to Delhi's chronic air pollution problem.

Environment minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said vehicles operating without a valid PUCC posed a direct threat to public health. "Vehicular emissions are among the biggest contributors to air pollution. A vehicle running without a valid PUC certificate is no less than committing a crime against Delhi's air," he said, stressing that enforcement would not be relaxed even when pollution levels improve.

People wait at a PUC centre on Tuesday. SANCHIT KHANNA/HT

Meanwhile, officials said recent inspections of authorised PUC centres across the city have revealed widespread irregularities. Officials said 12 centres were found shut during surprise inspections and were blacklisted, while 27 others were issued show-cause notices for violating prescribed norms. Licences of two centres were cancelled after violations were confirmed, the environment department said, adding that verification drives would now be carried out on a continuous basis to ensure transparency and accuracy in emission testing.

The drive has also led to stepped-up enforcement at fuel stations. Joint teams of the transport department and traffic police have been checking vehicles and denying fuel to those without valid certificates, triggering a sharp surge in demand at PUCC centres across the city.

Transport minister Pankaj Singh said more than 100,000 PUCC certificates were generated in the first three days after the drive was launched. Officials said the enforcement campaign would continue in the coming weeks as part of a broader strategy to reduce emissions from Delhi's growing vehicle fleet.

To further tighten checks, the cabinet has approved four new automated vehicle testing stations (ATS) for commercial vehicles. Three centres are under development at Tehkhand, Burari and Nand Nagri, while one ATS at Jhuljhuli is already operational. These facilities are expected to improve the frequency and accuracy of fitness and emission testing for heavy vehicles.

"In the absence of such testing centres, many commercial vehicles from Delhi were obtaining fitness certificates from outside the city, which also led to revenue loss," Sirsa said, adding that the new stations would close this gap.

At the same time, the government has stepped up action against industrial sources of pollution. Official data shows that the Delhi Pollution Control Committee has issued closure notices to 411 polluting industrial units, while the Municipal Corporation of Delhi has sealed 400 establishments, taking total enforcement actions to over 800.

The cabinet has also amended guidelines for high-rise buildings to allow the installation of mist-based automated dust suppression systems.

PUC CENTRES FACE SCRUTINY

- **12** PUC centres found to be shut
- **27** Issued show-cause notices
- **2** Got licences cancelled
- **411** Polluting units served closure notices by govt
- **400** Units sealed
- **4** ATS for commercial vehicles approved
- **3** ATS under development
- 100,000+ PUC certificates issued in 3 days

Economic Times, Delhi, 24/12/2025
Page No: 13, Size: 10.90cm × 30.80cm

FUEL RETAILING PLANS

HMEL to Invest ₹2,600 Crore in Bathinda Refinery

Our Bureau

New Delhi: HPCL Mittal Energy Ltd (HMEL) is planning to invest ₹2,600 crore to set up a new petrochemical facility at its Bathinda refinery and enter the fuel retailing business.

"Under this investment, polypropylene downstream industries will be set up and new fine chemical projects will be established," the company said in a statement.

HMEL's refinery in Bathinda has emerged as a major hub for polypropylene manufacturing, meeting nearly 14% of the country's total polypropylene demand, said CEO Prabh Das.

The company is also planning to open petrol pumps across Punjab, the statement quoted Punjab Cabinet minister Sanjeev Arora as saying. The proposed fuel outlets will offer petrol, diesel, CNG and electric vehicle charging facilities.

HMEL, a joint venture between state-run Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Lakshmi N Mittal Group, operates an 11.3 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) refinery and a 1.2 mtpa polyethylene plant and a 1 mtpa polypropylene plant at Bathinda.