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## Refinery will boost growth, says PM

**STATE SLIPPING** In the last two decades, Punjab has 'lagged' in agriculture and small-scale industrial sector, says Manmohan

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**PHULOKHARI (BATHINDA), NEW DELHI:** Unveiling the plaque to formally inaugurate the 9 million-metric tonne capacity Guru Gobind Singh oil refinery in Bathinda district's Phulokhari village on Saturday, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said it would propel Punjab's economic growth.

Spread across 2,400 acres, the refinery is located some 40 km from Bathinda city.

The PM said the project was a leap forward in Punjab's industrial development.

"Right from the beginning of the joint venture of the Rs 21,500 crore refinery, between Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) and Mittal Energy Investment Limited (MEL), the Congress-led UPA government has been closely monitoring the progress of the mega project," he said, in chaste Punjabi. "After our government came to power at the Centre in 2004, we have been making all possible efforts to ensure the competition of the project well in time. I am happy to share that the central government kept all its promises to make the joint venture of the HPCL and MEL a success."

The PM was accompanied by union petroleum and natural gas minister Jaipal Reddy, Punjab governor Shivrang Patil, Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal, minister of state for petroleum and natural gas RPN Singh, union minister of state for planning and science and technology Ashwani Kumar and chairman and chief executive officer of Arcelor Mittal, Lakshmi N Mittal.

The PM said the Centre also played an instrumental role in removing various impediments that could have been stumbling blocks in the progress of the project.

Ever since the UPA government came to power at the Centre, the interests of Punjab have always been taken care of

MANMOHAN SINGH  
Prime Minister

ect.

He said the refinery would not only cater to the energy needs of the people of Bathinda district, but of Punjab and the entire northern region.

He said the project showed that the combined efforts of public and private sector can play a significant role in success of such mega industrial projects and achieve wonders for industrial growth.

In recent times the country had been making considerable progress in the refining sector, he said. "In 1998, the country's refining capacity of crude oil was merely 620 lakh tonnes, which has now gone up to 2,130 lakh tonnes," he said. "This would help India enhance refined fuel exports."

He said since India imports nearly 80% crude oil from various countries, such state-of-the-art refining units were the need of the hour.

Petroleum minister Jaipal Reddy said India was producing 129 million metric tonnes (MMT) petroleum oil lubricants till 2007, which has now gone up to 147 MMT.

### 'PUNJAB HAS FALLEN BEHIND'

Expressing concern over Punjab's development curve, the prime minister said the state was the architect of the green revolution in the country. The state's hard-working farmers made it possible for it to achieve excellence in agriculture, he said. Even in the small-scale indus-

### 'Refinery will help meet region's energy needs'

Mittal said the refinery would cater to the energy needs of Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.

He said he was happy that the project had got the full support of both the central and state governments, and was particularly grateful to the people of

Bathinda for their support.

"Without the support of the local people, the project would not have been possible," Mittal said.

He said he was aware of his social responsibilities towards the people of Bathinda area and would see how best he could help them in the health and education sectors and by providing employment.

trial sector such as cycles and hosiery in Ludhiana, machine parts in Batala and sports goods in Jalandhar, Punjab used to excel, "but not any more", he said.

In the last two decades, the state had "lagged behind" in various fields. It is no more the number one state, he said.

Spelling out the problems Punjab faced, Manmohan Singh said there was lot of unemployment among the educated youth.

The state needs to do a lot in providing "skill development courses" to the young and educated, and vocational courses to students. Punjab has already "lagged" in the information technology sector, which has seriously hampered the state's growth, he said.

He said the state also needed to do a lot on the infrastructure front, including providing good roads, transport and adequate power.

"Ever since the UPA government came to power at the Centre, the interests of Punjab have always been taken care of," he said. "Facilitating setting up of the state-of-the-art oil refinery in Bathinda is one such example."

Badal, who spoke prior to the

prime minister, demanded that the Centre should take care of the nearly Rs 30,000-crore debt burden on Punjab farmers. He also sought tax concessions, as accorded to some of the hill states in north India, for development of the industrial sector.

The Punjab chief minister pitched for setting up of a state-of-the-art hospital on the lines of Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences, particularly to tackle cancer, which was, he said, spreading in Bathinda and several districts of the state.

The prime minister said the Centre had already started health mission programmes in Hoshiarpur and Mansa districts. He said Bathinda would also be included.

The advanced research diagnostic centre of Baba Farid University for Medical and Life Sciences in Faridkot had sought three projects from the Centre to treat cancer. The atomic energy regulatory board had already given its nod to two projects while the third one was under consideration for clearance, Manmohan Singh said.

The prime minister said joining of the east and west freight corridor would also help Punjab's industry.