

Time for a breather; downgrade to ADD

Information Technology ▶ Result Update ▶ July 30, 2026

CMP (Rs): 310 | TP (Rs): 330

Quess reported strong operating performance in 1Q. Revenue grew 7.4% qoq to Rs41.8bn, above our estimate of Rs39.9bn, partly driven by a one-time revenue increase of Rs1.76bn due to the new labor code. EBITDAM moderated by 20bps qoq to 2.0% (up 10bps yoy), largely on the annual merit cycle and variable-pay reset that flowed through in 1Q, of which ~11bps was an optical drag from the Rs1.76bn one-time labor-code pass-through. By segment, General Staffing (GS) revenue grew 8% qoq, led by Manufacturing and CRT (consumer, retail, telecom), even as BFSI challenges persisted amid regulatory headwinds. Professional Staffing (PS) revenue rose 9% qoq on GCC-led demand, while Overseas Staffing (OS) revenue was broadly flat qoq. The management expects acceleration in GS associate additions entering in 2Q, and targets close to double-digit growth in associates in FY27 on the back of the festive season, 86 new contracts signed, and 37k open positions. It continues to guide for PS EBITDAM at 11-12% and Overseas EBITDAM at 6.5-7% as the portfolio matures. Under Quess 2.0, it aspires to lift the higher-margin, dollar-linked revenue mix to 20-25% of revenue (currently ~8%) over the next 3-4 years through partner-led, capital-light talent corridors (Japan signed and live; Nordics/Europe, Israel, and North America in the pipeline), and ~2/3rd of profit from higher-margin segments. We raise our FY27-29E EPS by 3-12% on baking in 1Q performance. Thus, our SOTP-based TP rises by ~14% to Rs330 (from Rs290). We like Quess's strong execution and remain positive on medium-term growth prospects. However, after 16%/59% up-move in stock price in the last 1M/3M, we see limited upside and, thus, downgrade Quess to ADD from Buy.

Results summary

Revenue was up by 7.4% qoq/14.5% yoy to Rs41.8bn, above our estimate of Rs39.9bn. The new labor code drove a Rs1.76bn one-time revenue pass-through, with ~68% of customers covered by 1Q and the balance expected by end-2Q/early-3Q. EBITDA fell 2.1% qoq/rose 21.2% yoy to Rs845mn, with EBITDAM falling by 20bps sequentially to 2.0%, in line with our estimates. Profit increased 27.7% qoq/60.9% yoy to Rs819mn, above our estimate of Rs551mn, on the back of revenue beat and higher other income (driven by income tax refund). What we liked: Revenue beat, strong performance in the PS business. What we did not like: Continued softness in BFSI.

Revenue growth driven by GS and PS segments

GS revenue came in at Rs36.0bn, up 8.1% qoq/15.2% yoy (aided by the Rs1.76bn one-time labor-code pass-through), with EBITDAM at 1.4% (down 20bps qoq due to pass-through revenue and annual merit cycle). GS revenue growth was led by CRT and Manufacturing, while BFSI saw a marginal decline. PS revenue stood at Rs2.5bn, up 8.8% qoq/3.3% yoy, with EBITDAM down by 170bps to 11.1% on the back of the merit increase cycle and variable payouts. Overseas Business revenue stood at Rs3.3bn, flat qoq/up 17.1% yoy (EBITDA of Rs206mn, at ~6.2% margin), led by the Middle East (27% yoy revenue growth, 12% EBITDAM), Malaysia (55% YoY), the Philippines (17% YoY), and Singapore (12%).

Quess Corp: Financial Snapshot (Consolidated)

Y/E Mar (Rs mn)	FY25	FY26	FY27E	FY28E	FY29E
Revenue	149,672	153,052	174,502	191,935	211,117
EBITDA	2,623	3,124	3,588	4,039	4,441
Adj. PAT	2,101	2,297	2,712	2,825	3,162
Adj. EPS (Rs)	14.1	15.4	18.1	18.9	21.1
EBITDA margin (%)	1.8	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1
EBITDA growth (%)	11.9	19.1	14.8	12.6	9.9
Adj. EPS growth (%)	56.6	8.8	18.1	4.2	11.9
RoE (%)	10.8	20.4	22.4	21.7	22.6
RoIC (%)	15.1	34.2	35.2	37.7	40.9
P/E (x)	21.9	20.9	17.1	16.4	14.7
EV/EBITDA (x)	16.6	14.0	12.1	10.6	9.4
P/B (x)	4.3	4.0	3.7	3.4	3.2
FCFF yield (%)	8.7	5.1	5.6	7.0	7.9

Source: Company, Emkay Research

Target Price – 12M	Jun-27
Change in TP (%)	13.8
Current Reco.	ADD
Previous Reco.	BUY
Upside/(Downside) (%)	6.5

Stock Data	QUESS IN
52-week High (Rs)	320
52-week Low (Rs)	164
Shares outstanding (mn)	149.4
Market-cap (Rs bn)	46
Market-cap (USD mn)	483
Net-debt, FY27E (Rs mn)	(2,951.0)
ADTV-3M (mn shares)	0.8
ADTV-3M (Rs mn)	305.7
ADTV-3M (USD mn)	3.2
Free float (%)	43.2
Nifty-50	24,317.2
INR/USD	95.7

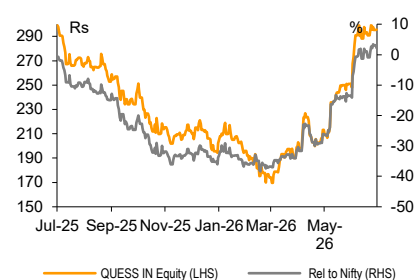
Shareholding, Jun-26

Promoters (%)	56.8
FPIs/MFs (%)	8.6/11.9

Price Performance

(%)	1M	3M	12M
Absolute	15.7	58.8	5.4
Rel. to Nifty	13.6	56.7	7.7

1-Year share price trend (Rs)



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Earnings call KTAs

- 1) General staffing added 86 new contracts during the quarter, with growth led by manufacturing and CRT (consumer, retail, telecom) verticals, while BFSI saw a marginal decline.
- 2) The BFSI softness stemmed from regulatory headwinds on what can be outsourced. The management sees significant growth opportunities in segments like housing finance, NBFCs, fintechs, etc.
- 3) Manufacturing carries higher markups (Rs800-1,000 vs Rs600-700 for typical general staffing) and 5-6% gross margin vs 2-3% in consumer, but requires greater sourcing intensity and infrastructure to deliver. The company is scaling its revenue from Manufacturing, which would support margin expansion over the medium term.
- 4) Roughly 70% of general staffing contracts are fixed-markup and 30% variable, with ~38% of new contracts signed this quarter coming on the variable-markup model.
- 5) GCCs contributed ~71% to headcount and 68% to PS revenue. The company is providing GCC talent largely in the 5-13-year experience-band, with niche skills generating Rs0.15-0.25mn revenue per associate per month.
- 6) Under Quess 2.0, the company is building partner-led, capital-light talent corridors across healthcare, technology, civil, hospitality and allied, and finance and professional. The model targets inbound GCC demand and reverse skilled-talent mobility rather than setting up staffing operations in demographically negative markets, with the management flagging no M&A at present and a ~\$680bn largely untapped global HR-services market against the ~\$20bn Indian market where Quess leads.
- 7) The company received income tax refunds, including interest of Rs2.61bn, leading to higher other income during the quarter.

Exhibit 1: Quarterly snapshot

Particular (Rs mn)	1QFY27	4QFY26	qoq (%)	1QFY26	yoy (%)
Revenue	41,817	38,925	7.4	36,514	14.5
Employee benefit expenses	39,592	36,924		34,343	
Other expenses	1,380	1,137		1,474	
EBITDA	845	864	-2.1	697	21.2
Margins (%)	2.0	2.2	-20	1.9	10
Depreciation	98	106		105	
EBIT	747	758	-1.4	592	26.1
Margins (%)	1.8	1.9	-20	1.6	20
Interest paid	144	135		99	
Other income	255	62		47	
Non-recurring items	0	6		-19	
PBT	859	690	24.4	522	
Tax provided	38	47		12	
PAT	821	643		510	
Minority interest	-2	-2		-1	
Reported net profit	819	641	27.7	509	60.9
Emkay net profit	819	635	28.9	528	55.2
EPS (Rs)	5.5	4.3	27.0	3.4	59.8

Source: Company, Emkay Research

This report is intended for Team White Marque Solutions (team.emkay@whitemarquesolutions)

Exhibit 2: Changes in estimates

(Rs mn)	FY27E			FY28E			FY29E		
	Old	New	Chg (%)	Old	New	Chg (%)	Old	New	Chg (%)
Revenue	167,862	174,502	4.0	187,864	191,935	2.2	209,815	211,117	0.6
EBITDA	3,444	3,588	4.2	3,875	4,039	4.2	4,136	4,441	7.4
EBITDA margin	2.1%	2.1%		2.1%	2.1%		2.0%	2.1%	
Net profit	2,420	2,712	12.1	2,738	2,825	3.2	2,933	3,162	7.8
EPS (Rs)	16.2	18.1	12.1	18.3	18.9	3.2	19.6	21.1	7.8

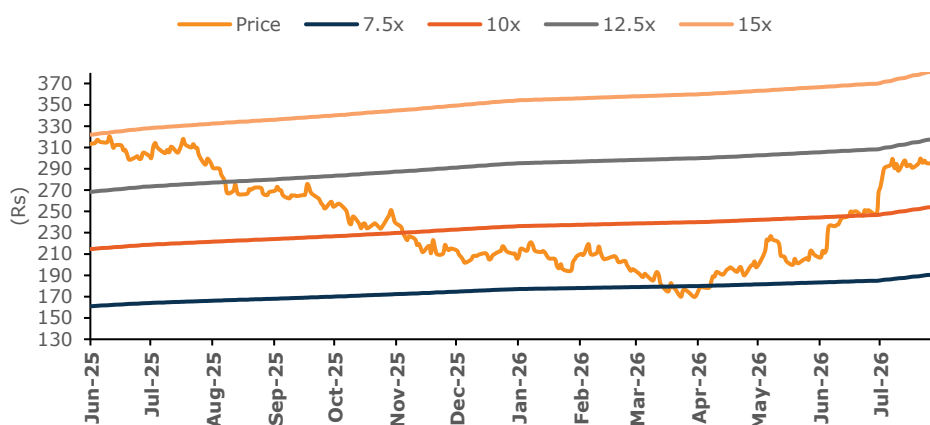
Source: Company, Emkay Research

Exhibit 3: Actuals vs estimates

(Rs mn)	Actual	Estimate		Variation		Comment
		Emkay	Consensus	Emkay	Consensus	
Revenue	41,817	39,948	39,722	4.7%	5.3%	Revenue came in higher than our estimate, partly due to a one-time revenue impact of Rs1.76bn due to the new labor code.
EBITDA	845	798	821	5.9%	3.0%	EBITDA came in line with our estimates
EBITDA margin	2.0%	2.0%	2.1%	0 bps	0 bps	
PAT	819	551	622	48.6%	31.6%	Profit beat estimates due to revenue beat and higher other income.

Source: Company, Bloomberg, Emkay Research

Exhibit 4: Quess – One-year forward EV/EBITDA



Source: Company, Emkay Research

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Exhibit 5: Key operating metrics - Quest

Metric	1QFY25	2QFY25	3QFY25	4QFY25	1QFY26	2QFY26	3QFY26	4QFY26	1QFY27	Rs mn	qoq (%)	yoy (%)
Revenue (Rs mn)	35,869	37,048	40,191	36,568	36,514	38,316	39,297	38,925	41,817		7.4%	14.5%
Revenue by business segment (%)												
General Staffing	86.9	86.9	87.4	86.1	85.5	86.6	86.7	85.5	86.0	35,965	8.1%	15.2%
Professional Staffing	5.2	5.5	5.4	6.0	6.7	5.8	5.9	6.0	6.0	2,521	8.8%	3.3%
Overseas Staffing	7.9	7.6	7.2	7.8	7.8	7.6	7.4	8.5	8.0	3,328	0.2%	17.1%
Digital Platforms	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2	-56.0%	-73.6%
Margin by business segment (%)												
General Staffing	1.4	1.9	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.4	1.3	1.6	1.4		-15bps	-4bps
Professional Staffing	9.1	9.9	9.3	9.2	10.2	12.2	12.5	12.8	11.1		-170bps	85bps
Overseas Staffing	5.6	5.0	5.6	6.1	6.2	6.2	7.0	6.3	6.2		-8bps	-2bps
Digital Platforms	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm	nm		nm	nm
Gen Staffing – Sector concentration (%)												
BFSI	32.0	29.0	28.0	21.0	24.0	24.0	25.0	24.0	21.0	7,553	-5%	1%
CRT (Consumer, Retail, and Telecom)	44.0	46.0	46.0	50.0	43.0	48.0	48.0	48.0	53.0	19,061	19%	42%
M&I (Manufacturing and Industrial)	15.0	16.0	15.0	18.0	19.0	18.0	18.0	19.0	19.0	6,833	8%	15%
Others	9.0	9.0	10.0	11.0	14.0	10.0	8.0	9.0	7.0	2,518	-16%	-42%
Professional Staffing – Revenue mix (%)												
GCC	62.0	68.0	67.0	70.0	73.0	69.0	67.0	67.0	68.0	1,714	10.4%	-3.8%
Enterprise	23.0	23.0	24.0	21.0	18.0	21.0	21.0	22.0	21.0	529	3.8%	20.5%
IT/ITeS	15.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	10.0	11.0	12.0	11.0	277	-0.3%	26.2%
Prof Staffing – Sector concentration (%)												
IT services	20.0	21.0	22.0	22.0	21.0	23.0	21.0	21.0	19.0	479	-1.6%	-6.6%
CRT (Consumer, Retail, and Telecom)	13.0	15.0	20.0	17.0	17.0	22.0	22.0	20.0	23.0	580	25.1%	39.7%
ITES	20.0	19.0	17.0	17.0	16.0	18.0	20.0	21.0	18.0	454	-6.7%	16.2%
MSP	25.0	23.0	23.0	26.0	28.0	16.0	17.0	18.0	19.0	479	14.8%	-29.9%
EMPI (Engg, Mfg, Process, and Infra)	15.0	15.0	13.0	13.0	12.0	13.0	12.0	12.0	10.0	252	-9.3%	-13.9%
BFSI	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	11.0	277	49.6%	89.3%
Prof Staffing – Client concentration (%)												
Top 10%	42.0	43.0	58.0	43.0	45.0	40.0	49.0	48.0	40.0	1,008	-9.3%	-8.2%
Next 40%	37.0	36.0	32.0	36.0	34.0	37.0	37.0	38.0	50.0	1,261	43.2%	51.9%
Others	21.0	21.0	10.0	22.0	20.0	24.0	14.0	14.0	10.0	252	-22.3%	-48.4%
Overseas Staffing – Revenue by region (%)												
Singapore	67.0	66.0	62.0	61.0	55.0	50.0	48.0	50.0	50.0	1,664	0.2%	6.4%
ME	18.0	17.0	20.0	19.0	21.0	23.0	25.0	23.0	23.0	766	0.2%	28.2%
ROW	16.0	17.0	19.0	20.0	23.0	26.0	28.0	28.0	27.0	899	-3.4%	37.4%
Overseas – Client concentration (%)												
Top 10%	54.0	54.0	52.0	52.0	52.0	52.0	52.0	51.0	51.0	1,698	0.2%	14.8%
Next 40%	24.0	25.0	24.0	30.0	30.0	30.0	30.0	31.0	30.0	999	-3.1%	17.1%
Others	22.0	21.0	24.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	18.0	19.0	632	5.7%	23.6%
Headcount												
Total headcount	447,000	510,000	463,000	459,201	461,363	482,929	483,316	478,419	482,041		0.8%	4.5%
Gen Staffing headcount	447,000	458,000	463,000	447,000	449,112	470,337	470,774	465,576	469,368		0.8%	4.5%
Prof Staffing headcount	-	-	-	6,590	6,652	6,862	6,934	7,066	7,129		0.9%	7.2%
Overseas Staffing headcount	-	-	-	5,611	5,599	5,730	5,608	5,777	5,544		-4.0%	-1.0%

Source: Company, Emkay Research

Quess Corp: Consolidated Financials and Valuations

Profit & Loss

Y/E Mar (Rs mn)	FY25	FY26	FY27E	FY28E	FY29E
Revenue	149,672	153,052	174,502	191,935	211,117
Revenue growth (%)	9.3	2.3	14.0	10.0	10.0
EBITDA	2,623	3,124	3,588	4,039	4,441
EBITDA growth (%)	11.9	19.1	14.8	12.6	9.9
Depreciation & Amortization	412	418	443	481	518
EBIT	2,211	2,706	3,145	3,558	3,924
EBIT growth (%)	25.4	22.4	16.2	13.2	10.3
Other operating income	-	-	-	-	-
Other income	236	165	397	198	246
Financial expense	386	492	573	608	646
PBT	2,061	2,379	2,968	3,149	3,524
Extraordinary items	(1,643)	(81)	0	0	0
Taxes	(41)	76	249	315	352
Minority interest	(1)	(6)	(8)	(9)	(9)
Income from JV/Associates	0	0	0	0	0
Reported PAT	458	2,216	2,712	2,825	3,162
PAT growth (%)	(83.5)	383.9	22.4	4.2	11.9
Adjusted PAT	2,101	2,297	2,712	2,825	3,162
Diluted EPS (Rs)	14.1	15.4	18.1	18.9	21.1
Diluted EPS growth (%)	56.6	8.8	18.1	4.2	11.9
DPS (Rs)	10.0	10.9	12.0	13.0	14.0
Dividend payout (%)	70.7	73.8	66.2	68.8	66.2
EBITDA margin (%)	1.8	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1
EBIT margin (%)	1.5	1.8	1.8	1.9	1.9
Effective tax rate (%)	(2.0)	3.2	8.4	10.0	10.0
NOPLAT (pre-IndAS)	2,255	2,620	2,881	3,203	3,531
Shares outstanding (mn)	149	150	150	150	150

Source: Company, Emkay Research

Cash flows

Y/E Mar (Rs mn)	FY25	FY26	FY27E	FY28E	FY29E
PBT (ex-other income)	(833)	2,905	2,968	3,149	3,524
Others (non-cash items)	2,782	1,046	692	796	870
Taxes paid	1,292	(683)	(249)	(315)	(352)
Change in NWC	(728)	(284)	(494)	(119)	(131)
Operating cash flow	3,805	2,301	2,669	3,196	3,557
Capital expenditure	(15)	(86)	(221)	(219)	(236)
Acquisition of business	0	0	0	0	0
Interest & dividend income	-	-	-	-	-
Investing cash flow	22	(731)	(221)	(219)	(236)
Equity raised/(repaid)	4	4	-	0	0
Debt raised/(repaid)	(1,238)	(121)	0	0	0
Payment of lease liabilities	3,314	(244)	(50)	(50)	(50)
Interest paid	(134)	(249)	0	0	0
Dividend paid (incl tax)	(1,485)	(1,636)	(1,795)	(1,945)	(2,094)
Others	(3,643)	(128)	(233)	(272)	(292)
Financing cash flow	(3,181)	(2,374)	(2,078)	(2,267)	(2,436)
Net chg in Cash	645	(804)	370	710	885
OCF	3,805	2,301	2,669	3,196	3,557
Adj. OCF (w/o NWC chg.)	4,532	2,585	3,163	3,315	3,689
FCFF	3,790	2,215	2,448	2,977	3,322
FCFE	3,404	1,723	1,875	2,369	2,676
OCF/EBITDA (%)	145.0	73.6	74.4	79.1	80.1
FCFE/PAT (%)	743.2	77.7	69.1	83.8	84.6
FCFF/NOPLAT (%)	168.1	84.6	85.0	92.9	94.1

Source: Company, Emkay Research

Balance Sheet

Y/E Mar (Rs mn)	FY25	FY26	FY27E	FY28E	FY29E
Share capital	1,489	1,493	1,493	1,493	1,493
Reserves & Surplus	9,359	10,171	11,088	11,969	13,036
Net worth	10,849	11,665	12,581	13,462	14,529
Minority interests	11	18	25	34	43
Non-current liab. & prov.	0	0	0	0	0
Total debt	121	0	0	0	0
Total liabilities & equity	10,981	11,682	12,607	13,496	14,573
Net tangible fixed assets	102	85	95	105	115
Net intangible assets	36	7	7	7	7
Net ROU assets	906	1,151	1,201	1,251	1,301
Capital WIP	0	17	17	17	17
Goodwill	2,362	2,625	2,625	2,625	2,625
Investments [JV/Associates]	-	-	-	-	-
Cash & equivalents	2,669	2,581	2,951	3,661	4,546
Current assets (ex-cash)	22,042	23,927	26,579	28,633	30,893
Current Liab. & Prov.	17,138	18,709	20,868	22,802	24,930
NWC (ex-cash)	4,904	5,218	5,712	5,831	5,963
Total assets	10,981	11,682	12,607	13,496	14,573
Net debt	(2,549)	(2,581)	(2,951)	(3,661)	(4,546)
Capital employed	10,981	11,682	12,607	13,496	14,573
Invested capital	7,405	7,934	8,438	8,568	8,709
BVPS (Rs)	72.8	78.0	84.1	90.0	97.1
Net Debt/Equity (x)	(0.2)	(0.2)	(0.2)	(0.3)	(0.3)
Net Debt/EBITDA (x)	(1.0)	(0.8)	(0.8)	(0.9)	(1.0)
Interest coverage (x)	6.3	5.8	6.2	6.2	6.5
RoCE (%)	11.0	25.3	29.2	28.8	29.7

Source: Company, Emkay Research

Valuations and key Ratios

Y/E Mar	FY25	FY26	FY27E	FY28E	FY29E
P/E (x)	21.9	20.9	17.1	16.4	14.7
EV/CE(x)	4.0	3.7	3.4	3.2	2.9
P/B (x)	4.3	4.0	3.7	3.4	3.2
EV/Sales (x)	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
EV/EBITDA (x)	16.6	14.0	12.1	10.6	9.4
EV/EBIT(x)	19.7	16.2	13.8	12.0	10.6
EV/IC (x)	5.9	5.5	5.1	5.0	4.8
FCFF yield (%)	8.7	5.1	5.6	7.0	7.9
FCFE yield (%)	7.4	3.7	4.1	5.1	5.8
Dividend yield (%)	3.2	3.5	3.9	4.2	4.5
DuPont-RoE split					
Net profit margin (%)	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.5	1.5
Total asset turnover (x)	7.6	14.9	15.9	16.2	16.5
Assets/Equity (x)	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9
RoE (%)	10.8	20.4	22.4	21.7	22.6
DuPont-RoIC					
NOPLAT margin (%)	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7
IC turnover (x)	10.0	20.0	21.3	22.6	24.4
RoIC (%)	15.1	34.2	35.2	37.7	40.9
Operating metrics					
Core NWC days	12.0	12.4	11.9	11.1	10.3
Total NWC days	12.0	12.4	11.9	11.1	10.3
Fixed asset turnover	19.7	58.7	64.1	70.3	77.0
Opex-to-revenue (%)	98.2	98.0	97.9	97.9	97.9

Source: Company, Emkay Research

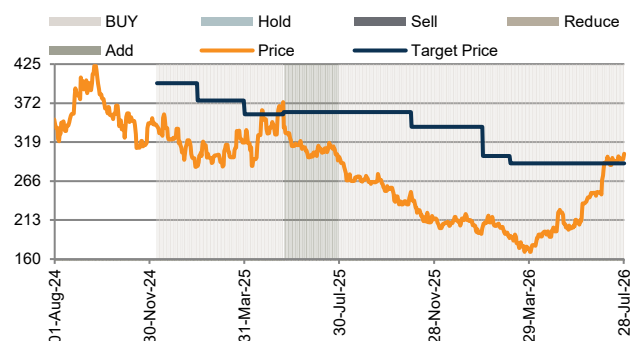
This report is intended for Team White Marque Solutions (team.emkay@whitemarqueresolutions)

RECOMMENDATION HISTORY - DETAILS

Date	Closing Price (Rs)	TP (Rs)	Rating	Analyst
01-Jul-26	273	290	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
05-May-26	223	290	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
31-Mar-26	170	290	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
05-Mar-26	191	290	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
18-Feb-26	208	300	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
29-Jan-26	205	300	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
01-Jan-26	208	340	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
30-Oct-25	246	340	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
01-Oct-25	255	360	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
29-Jul-25	299	360	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
01-Jul-25	300	360	Add	Dipeshkumar Mehta
20-May-25	338	360	Add	Dipeshkumar Mehta
31-Mar-25	318	357	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
30-Jan-25	286	376	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
01-Jan-25	325	399	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta
09-Dec-24	341	399	Buy	Dipeshkumar Mehta

Source: Company, Emkay Research

RECOMMENDATION HISTORY - TREND



Source: Company, Bloomberg, Emkay Research

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ADD	5-15% upside
REDUCE	5% upside to 15% downside
SELL	>15% downside

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