

## Himachal chief minister rules out tax cuts on fuels

Unfazed by the truckers' nationwide stir, Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Prem Kumar Dhumal Wednesday ruled out any reduction in sales tax or value-added tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel in the state.

'The central government is responsible for the frequent rise in fuel prices,' he told reporters here.

He said 16 percent tax levied on diesel by the state government is lower than a majority of the states in the country.

But the petrol pump owners in the state are up in arms against the government for higher sales tax compared to neighbouring Haryana and Punjab.

'The business in petrol pumps located in the border areas has gone down drastically since the fuel is cheaper in Punjab and Haryana,' Himachal Pradesh Petrol Pump Association president Sukumar Singh said.

The rate of diesel in Haryana and Punjab is Rs.33.60 per litre and Rs.33.62 respectively, while in Himachal Pradesh it is Rs.35.25 per litre.

Punjab and Haryana had recently reduced sales tax on fuels to ease the burden on consumers.

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