

# Private sugarcane mill owners to boycott govt meet

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**LUCKNOW:** Private sugarcane mill owners have decided to boycott the 'cane reservation meetings' organised by the state government each year to allocate them cane areas on the basis of demand.

The move comes two days after UP Cane Department announced that the meetings would be held in every district from September 10.

"With 66 out of 95 private mills having given suspension notices so far and maintenance staff laid off consequently, it would not be possible for the private mills to participate in the meetings," said a press statement from UP Sugar Mills' Association (UPSMA). There are 95 private and 23 cooperative sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh.

The meetings are held before the crushing season and are used to allocate cane areas to mills on the basis of demand. These are attended by representatives of mills and cane societies (farmers) apart from government officials.

But the mills have already informed the government about the suspension of operations in the coming season till the resolution of demands including the linking of cane price to sugar in accordance with Rangarajan Committee recommendation and release of financial assistance are met with.

The private mills are saddled with massive cane arrears of



about Rs 5,000 crore and the Allahabad high court is hearing a case in the matter.

"It won't be in the interest of the industry if the mills take part in the meetings unless the pending demands are resolved," the statement said.

Last year, the mills' representatives did not turn up for the meetings due to pending demands. But the matter was resolved and the mills had agreed to start crushing on assurances by the state, including evolving a permanent cane-pricing formula.

On Wednesday chief minister Akhilesh Yadav directed the officials to set a time frame to the private sugar cane mills for paying cane arrears to farmers while threatening action against big defaulters. Yadav also reiterated that his government was committed to pay full arrears to the farmers.

"We appeal the state government to try resolve the issue and Centre to intervene so that the industry doesn't suffer," the statement added.

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