

Centre unlikely to permit sugar exports until June

FIRST THINGS FIRST. Focus to remain on controlling domestic prices: Food Secretary

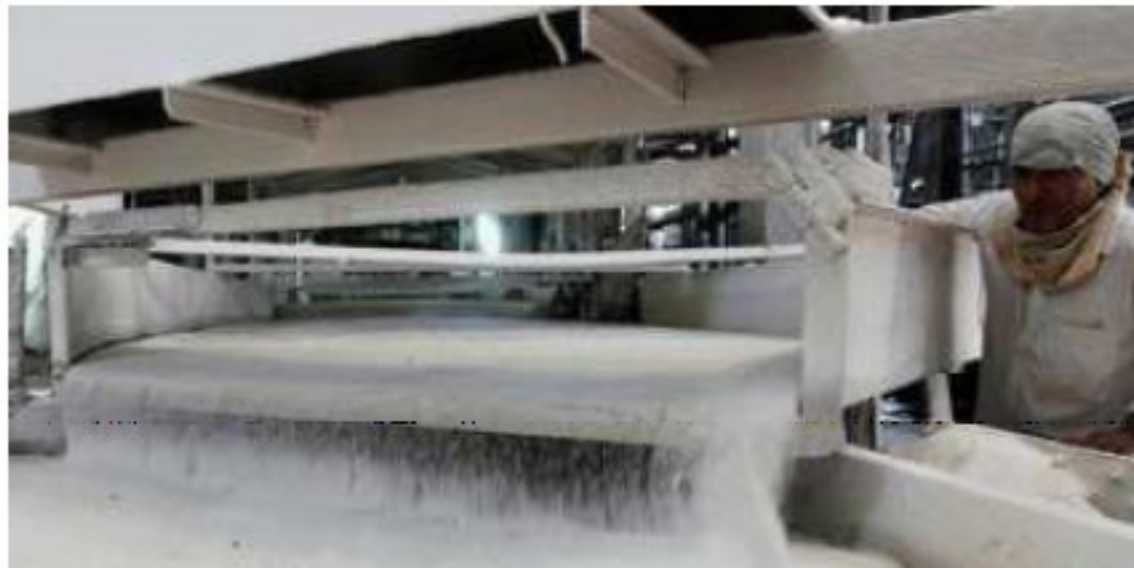
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New Delhi

The Indian government will not allocate any sugar export quota until there is an assessment of the sugarcane crop for the 2024-25 season, Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra said on Thursday. As data for sugarcane crop will be available only in June, exports are unlikely to be allowed before that.

Briefing media on prices of essential commodities, Chopra said Indian sugar is among the cheapest in the world. Only about 2 per cent retail inflation has been reported in the sugar sector in a decade. In contrast, the increase in the government-fixed price of sugarcane is also higher.

CURBS EXTENDED

On the export quota of sugar, he said, "A decision will be



AWAITING CLARITY. Exports are unlikely to be allowed before June as data for sugarcane crop will be available only then

taken in due course whether to issue or not to issue quota based on the Agriculture Ministry's crop data as well as the feedback we get about the likely production of sugarcane next year (for 2024-25 season). We are anticipating that there may be an impact on the sugarcane crop next season due to moisture stress. As a result, we have to be careful to ensure that the interest of the

consumers is protected."

The government on October 19 extended the sugar export curb indefinitely, by continuing it under the restricted category. This means shipments will be allowed only with permits to be issued by the Food Ministry.

Asked about the current sugar production estimate in view of lower sugarcane output pegged by States such as

Maharashtra and Karnataka, he said, "As you are aware August had a very dry monsoon (highest deficit since 1901) in the entire country, except a few patches, as a result of which there was stress on sugarcane crop in Karnataka and Maharashtra.

"However, Uttar Pradesh received good rains in that period and it will compensate to a certain extent the shortfall we are anticipating from Maharashtra and Karnataka. However, whether it can do it fully, we are not very sure."

The Agriculture Ministry is likely to share the first estimate of cane production next week after which the Food Ministry will assess the likely estimate for sugar, he said. Sowing of sugarcane starts from November and the Agriculture Ministry starts releasing the planting data only in June.