
How Maharashtra has emerged as the sugar hub of the nation

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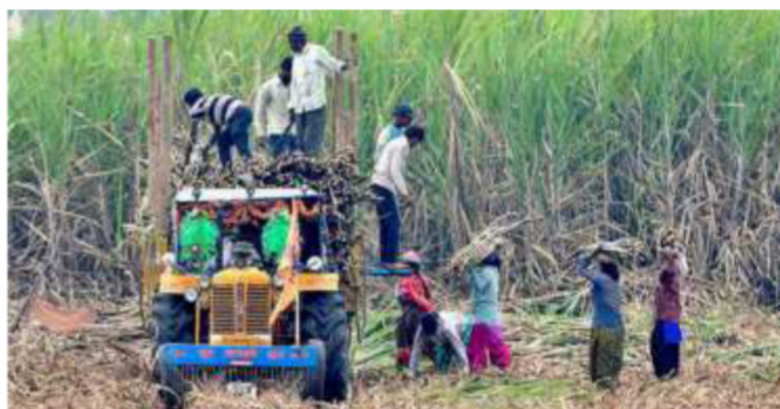
Maharashtra emerged as the highest sugar exporter and producer in India in 2021-22 sugar season (SS) exporting almost 60 per cent of total exports in India. This was since some 122 factories in the State exported over 30 per cent of their 2021-22 production while 20 factories exported more than 90 per cent.

Sugar industry in Maharashtra expect mills to continue the momentum in the coming SS and the State will consolidate its position as India's sugar hub, thanks to political bonhomie that has helped the sugar industry to flourish.

POLITICAL BONHOMIE

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According to the State government, Maharashtra has a 35 per cent share in In-



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dia's ethanol production. The sugar industry was once dominated by Congress and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leaders in the State. Today, BJP leaders have entered the arena, led by Union Minister Nitin Gadkari.

"State politicians have not politicised the industry and have ensured that overall sugar industry doesn't suffer in political one-upmanship. There are political games and counter games like approving and disapproving financial support, but that

has not resulted in the closure of mills," says Ashok Ghorpade who has studied western Maharashtra's sugar politics closely.

Not surprisingly NCP President Sharad Pawar recently said that Gadkari is the voice of sugarcane growers at the Centre. "Gadkari has been addressing concerns of all party sugar mills at the central level, the role which Pawar played during his tenure," said one of the senior Congress leaders who was a director with the Sangli-based sugar mill.