

# No plan to lift export curbs on rice, wheat, sugar: Govt

Possibility of import of wheat ruled out

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**THE GOVERNMENT IS** not planning to lift export curbs on several agricultural commodities such as sugar, wheat, rice and onion, food minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday. "There is no plan and no need to lift export curbs on several agricultural commodities and we are reviewing the supply situation regularly," Goyal said at an informal media briefing. He stated that there is no proposal for wheat and sugar imports at present. The government has imposed restrictions on export of these essential food items to increase domestic availability and rein in prices which were adding to the inflationary trend. The government has banned exports of white rice and imposed 20% export duties on par-boiled rice last year to improve domestic supplies. However, to meet the food secu-



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urity needs for developing countries, the government is providing rice on request. Goyal stated that India has provided rice to countries like Indonesia, Senegal, and Gambia recently.

Retail rice prices rose by 12.33% in December and rice prices are at an elevated level since October 2022. This is despite the government's attempt to sell surplus rice in the open market from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) stock. "Let me examine the issue of the increase in rice prices and will

initiate appropriate measures to address it," Goyal said. Wheat exports have been banned since May 2022. He said that importing wheat to meet improved domestic supplies does not arise as the country is expected to harvest a record of 114 million tonne (MT) in the 2023-24 season (July-June) as estimated by the first advance estimate of food grain production by the agriculture ministry. "Our informal queries from mandis across Punjab, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have stated that wheat

output will be highest ever and wheat prices may collapse," Goyal stated. To curb price rise, the FCI has sold 6.2 MT of wheat through weekly e-auction from its surplus stock which commenced from June. Retail inflation in wheat declined further to 4.69% in December from 6.36% in November on year. The government had also not provided any quota for sugar exports for the current season (Oct-Sept) of 2023-24. India had exported 6 MT of sugar in the 2022-23 season. Ruling out lifting curbs on onion exports, Goyal said that the government agencies are buying onions from farmers and lifting restrictions on the shipment of key vegetables would lead to a spike in domestic prices. "Our aim is to protect the interest of farmers as well as consumers," he said. With the arrivals of kharif harvest, the mandi prices at Lalsgaon, Maharashtra, the hub of the country's wholesale trade has fallen to a range of ₹1,500-1,800/quintal on Thursday from around ₹3,700-4,000/quintal prior to the imposition of shipment ban announced on December 7 till March 31, 2024.