

Malaysia wants India to ease export restrictions on rice, sugar and onion

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Malaysia would like India to keep the window of exports to the country open for essential commodities like rice, sugar and onions even if there is an overall ban on them, its minister for plantation and commodities Datuk Seri Johari Bin Abdul Ghani said on Thursday.

"Sugar, onions and basmati rice, we are in need of all. Our domestic rice production meets just 65 per cent of our requirement, while demand for basmati rice is rising and India can allocate some quantities for Malaysia even if there is an overall ban," Ghani told reporters.

The minister, who also met Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, expressed his country's desire to share expertise, seeds and technology to make India's National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) a success.

Under NMEO-OP, the Centre has targeted to domestically produce around 2.8-3.0 million tonnes of palm oil by 2032-33. This will help in bringing down import reliance by that much amount.

Ghani said oil palm estates, which are minimum 8,000-10,000 hectares in

Culling, surveillance but no vaccine to fight 'bird flu'

As bird flu continues to grow, a high-powered joint meeting of senior government functionaries has decided that surveillance with culling, and no vaccination will continue to be the first line of defense against it. Mass vaccination of birds with the currently available vaccines wasn't found to be a suitable strategy given the fragmented characteristics of India's poultry sector, a senior official said.

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size, are needed to get best results from high-yielding and low-gestation seeds.

Indonesia along with Malaysia is the biggest supplier of palm oil to India annually. On average India imports around 9.5-10 million tonnes of palm oil for domestic consumption, of which Malaysia contributes around 3 million tonnes. The rest comes from Indonesia.

Ghani said Malaysia will continue to

supply palm oil to India as almost 80 per cent of its domestic production of around 18-19 million tonnes is surplus.

"We can have special arrangements under which Malaysian companies can invest in India's palm oil mission," Ghani said. He also addressed the annual conference of Indian Vegetable Oil Producers Association (IVPA) earlier in the day.

India, the world's biggest exporter of rice and onions, and the second biggest exporter of sugar, imposed curbs on exports of these commodities in 2023 to keep local prices in check ahead of the general elections held in April-May 2024. Of late, there has been some rethink on the export ban on some commodities, including rice.

Ghani, meanwhile, also said that all the palm oil that is being exported to India from Malaysia now is being produced through sustainable sources.

"The reality is palm oil is a highly efficient oil. This is because while one gets 0.5 tonnes of oil from one hectare of soybeans, and 0.8-0.9 tonnes of oil from one hectare of rapeseed or sunflower seed, one can get as much as 3.3 tonnes of oil from one hectare of oil palm," Ghani said.