

# High-level meet to decide on cotton, grain exports

## Growers should not be stopped from selling their produce: Pawar

**Our Bureau**

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The Union Government will take a final decision on export of cotton and other agricultural produce, such as wheat, rice, sugar and onion, at a high-level meeting on April 30, the Food and Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, has said.

He said that his personal view was that there should not be any restrictions on growers to sell their produce in any market, exports or otherwise, he told newsmen at Anand on Friday evening.

He said that 110 lakh bales (of 170 kg each) cotton had already been exported this year before the ban was imposed, compared with 54 lakh bales last year. About 30 lakh bales are still lying with the producers and ginning mills, from which 20 lakh bales could still be exported as demand from textile mills has slackened. Production this year was estimated at 350 lakh bales as

against 330 lakh bales last year.

The Centre had to ban cotton exports recently in view of the "sudden mischievous demand" for exports from sectors other than users such as textile mills. This ban, however, sent a wrong signal to international markets as India could have been perceived as an "unreliable supplier."

Earlier, Mr Pawar launched the first phase of the National Dairy Plan at an outlay of Rs 2,242 crore at the National Dairy Development Board headquarters at Anand. The central sector scheme will be largely financed by an assistance of Rs 1,500 crore from International Development Association of the World Bank. The Centre will contribute Rs 175 crore, and the balance will come from the beneficiary States.

### **MUTTON EXPORT**

Mr Pawar regretted that the cooperative sector in milk pro-



**Fisheries Board building:** Mr Sharad Pawar, Union Minister for Food and Agriculture, shares a lighter moment with Mr N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, during the inauguration of the building of the National Fisheries Development Board in Hyderabad on Friday. - P.V. Sivakumar

duction has weakened, particularly in the northern States, as 70 per cent of milk production was now controlled by the private sector. Under the plan, the Centre plans to reverse this trend.

He said that the Centre also planned to launch a second Green Revolution to increase agricultural production with a focus on Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Assam, Odisha and West Bengal.

The Gujarat Chief Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, who was the chief guest at the event where the Plan was launched, urged Mr Pawar to take up with the Centre the issue of the alleged smuggling of milch cattle to Bangladesh.

He termed it as the Centre's "pink revolution" which could frustrate the goals of the Plan and the proposed second Green Revolution as the Centre was giving a subsidy of more than Rs 2,242 crore, envisaged for the phase one of the Plan, for the export of mutton.

However, Mr Pawar said the UPA Government had only continued the 20-year-old policy on mutton exports. No concessions have been given in this regard and a ban on slaughter of cow and its progeny continues.

Replying to questions, Mr Pawar said that 40 lakh tonnes of wheat and 20 lakh tonnes of rice could be exported after meeting the domestic demand this year.