

Meghalaya says no intention of allowing oil palm

Prabhudatta Mishra

New Delhi

Meghalaya will not allow oil palm cultivation due to a general opinion against it, said State Agriculture Minister Mazel Ampareen Lyngdoh.

But, instead it will focus on helping farmers get better return for their produce through export and value-addition.

Speaking to *businessline* in New Delhi, Ampareen said: "As of now, we are not looking at that, yet. Because, in the initial discussion, even on floor the Assembly in 2021 and 2022, there was much resistance. The topic of discussion

was: Should Meghalaya avoid or adopt oil palm. I don't think it (the issue of allowing) will be taken forward in current term of this government." The current government's five-year tenure began this March.

NATIONAL MISSION

Mizoram was the first to allow oil palm cultivation in the North-East more than 15 years ago and farmers have started reaping the benefits after the launch of the National Mission on Edible Oils – Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) in 2021.

According to NMEO-OP, with a special focus on the north-east region and the Andaman and Nicobar Is-



lands, the Centre targets to cover an additional area of 6.5 lakh hectare (lh) under oil palm by 2025-26 from 3.5 lh in 2019-20. The production of Crude Palm Oil (CPO) is expected to go up to 11.20 lakh tonnes (lt) by 2025-26 and to 28 lt by

2029-30 from a mere 0.27 lt in 2019-20. The Centre has announced an outlay of ₹11,040 crore by 2025-26 of which ₹8,844 crore will be its share and the rest State share and this includes the viability gap funding also.

Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura have already signed agreements with Godrej Agrovet and Patanjali Foods allowing them to enter into contract farming in different clusters to be decided by State governments.

VALUE-ADDITION

Ampareen said the government has been focusing on value-addition by helping farmers' collectives set up

processing facilities in collaboration with private companies. "Our farmers are now being prepared to ensure they engage themselves in certain level of processing.

Even farmers are being given skilled training to dry pineapples which are used by food processors," she said.

The State government has been organising farmers through clusters, forming self help groups, co-operatives, hand holding them for a few years till they become self sustained. The objective is to efficiently market their produce in large volume to get higher remunerative prices, she added.