

Govt says there is enough food after reports of panic-buying

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NEW DELHI

Union food and consumer affairs minister Pralhad Joshi on Friday urged people to disregard what he called misleading messages about food stocks, saying there are enough supplies available in the country after reports emerged of people stockpiling food.

"I want to assure everyone that we currently have stocks many times higher than the normal requirement—whether it is rice, wheat, or pulses such as chana, tur, masoor, or moong. There is absolutely no shortage," Joshi said on X.

Joshi also directed traders and businesses dealing with essential commodities to cooperate with law and warned that those found hoarding or stockpiling will be prosecuted.

India currently holds a rice stock of 35.6 million tonnes,

significantly above the buffer norm of 13.5 million tonnes, while wheat reserves stand at 38.3 million tonnes against a buffer norm of 27.6 million tonnes.

The minister's warning came as escalating tensions between India and Pakistan saw residents in border towns in Jammu, Rajasthan and Punjab rush out to buy essential goods like wheat, flour, rice and packaged foods.

Demand surged in both stores and on online platforms.

Packaged food companies said demand has increased in border cities in north India but assured of adequate supplies.

"Border areas are seeing greater demand with consumers panic-buying. We are prepared with our supply chain and are ensuring quick supplies. Delhi is not impacted yet. We are seeing panic buying in large stores and quick-commerce in these markets. We have an efficient supply chain, (we did) even during covid, so we won't be out of stock at all,"



Union food minister Pralhad Joshi urged the public to disregard what he called misleading messages about food stocks. HT

said Ashwani Arora, managing director and chief executive officer (CEO), LT Foods, which sells basmati rice.

To be sure, some grocery stores in Delhi reported increased demand for pulses and flour—as despite the capital remaining largely insulated from the conflict impact, a sense of panic prompted some households to stock up.

At a large department store

in south Delhi's busy Lajpat Nagar, shelves were empty of tea, soaps, coffee, pulses and biscuits on Friday afternoon. "We've seen a lot of bulk buying in the past three days," noted an employee at Bhagat Ram Om Prakash store.

With the fighting continuing till the early hours of Friday morning, the national capital was placed on high alert.

Angelo George, CEO, Bisleri

International, said the maker of packaged water is fully operational across India, including in regions facing disturbances. "We have implemented all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of our staff and associates, in line with government advisories. We are also closely monitoring demand trends—there has been a noticeable increase in northern markets and we are taking all measures to ensure uninterrupted supplies," he said.

Biscuit-maker Parle Products reported an uptick for its brands across small stores in border areas.

"We are seeing some increased buying in border markets, especially in Rajasthan and Punjab. Over the last 10 days we have already ensured that we have sufficient stock in those markets. Typically, in a situation like this

people tend to stock up on food items. Having experienced this earlier we have already ensured that we have a high amount of stock moved to these distribution centres," said Mayank Shah, senior category head, Parle Products. "We

are ensuring the stock is adequately available. There shouldn't be any panic," he added.

Meanwhile, distributors of fast-moving consumer products said the market

has sufficient stock for two months. "There is no need to panic. Yes, we have seen an uptick in demand for medicines and some essentials via general trade or kirana stores but it is not pan-India," said Dhairyashil Patil, president, All India Consumer Products Distributors' Federation.

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Packaged food firms reported surge in both stores and on online platforms from northern border cities