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1. Kerala Leads in GI Tags for Unique Local Products in FY 2022-23 (April 6, 2023)

According to data shared by the **GI Registry, Kerala received the highest number of Geographical Indication (GI) tags** for products among all states in India in the fiscal year 23 (FY23).

An Overview of the News

- Several products from Kerala have been recognized with the GI tag, including **Attappadi Attucombu avara (beans), Attappadi thuvara (red gram), Onattukara elu (sesame), Kanthalloor vattavada veluthulli (garlic), and Kodungallur pottuvellari (snap melon).**
- Apart from **six products from Kerala**, the **Geographical Indications (GI) Registry** selected **Mithila Makhana (aquatic fox nut) from Bihar and Alibaug white onion from Maharashtra** for GI recognition tag.
- **Tandoor Redgram, a local variety of pea, from Telangana, Ladakh Raktse Carpo Apricot from Ladakh, and Gamosa handicraft from Assam** were also selected for GI recognition.

About GI Tag Recognition 2022-23

- For the period between **April 2022 and March 2023**, a total of **12 products were selected for GI recognition**, including two foreign ones - **Brandy de Jerez from Spain and Provolone Valpadana from Italy.**
- In the last financial year (FY22), 50 products were selected for GI recognition, with **Uttar Pradesh having the highest number of GI tags (seven), followed by Uttarakhand with six.**
- The products from Uttar Pradesh selected for GI recognition in FY22 include **Chunar Glaze Pottery, Banaras Zardozi, Mirzapur Pital Barton, Banaras Wood Carving, Banaras Hand Block Print, Rataul Aam and Mau Saree.**
- **Aipan, Munsiyari Rajma, Uttarakhand handicraft Ringal Shilp, Tamta, Thulma (handicraft) and Kumaon chiura oil from Uttarakhand** were selected for GI recognition in FY22 in Uttarakhand.
- **Kanyakumari cloves, Kallakurichi wood carvings, Karuppur Kalamkari paintings, and Narasimhapettai Nagaswaram** were some of the products that were selected for GI recognition from **Tamil Nadu** in the last financial year.

About GI Tag

- It is the short form of **Geographical Indication** and it is a **unique identification of any region, town or state.**
- The tag is given in the name of certain products or signs that **symbolise the uniqueness of that particular region.**

- When a GI tag is given to a particular product, it certifies that the product is made by traditional methods, has special qualities.
- The Geographical Indication came into force on **15 September 2003**.
- **Darjeeling tea was given the first GI tag in India in 2004-2005.**
- GI tag is given to products related to **agriculture, handicrafts, food items, spirit drinks and industrial products.**
- The rules and regulations of the GI tag are governed by the **World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights at the international level.**

2. Chhattisgarh's Nagri Dubraj rice variety gets geographical indication tag (April 5, 2023)

Chhattisgarh's Nagri Dubraj rice variety gets geographical indication tag

The Geographical Indications Registry has granted **Geographical Indication (GI) tag to Nagari Dubraj, a fragrant rice from Chhattisgarh**, to give a unique identity to the brand.

An overview of the news

- The **Morena and Rewa Mango (both Madhya Pradesh)** have also been given the **GI Tag**.
- This will give a new identity to these products in the **national and international market**.

About Nagri Dubraj Rice

- The origin of Dubraj is believed to be from **Shringi Rishi Ashram area of Sihawa**.
- Its reference is found in **Valmiki Ramayana**. Sihawa area is considered to be the source of Dubraj in various research papers.
- The rice is of local variety and its grains are **small, the rice is very soft to eat after cooking**.
- Maximum yield of **six quintals is obtained from one acre**.
- The height of the paddy plant is short and the **maturity period is 140 days**.
- It is produced by "**Maa Durga Swashayata Group**", a women's self-help group from Nagari in Dhamtari district and had applied for the GI tag.

What is a GI Tag?

- It is an abbreviation of **Geographical Indication**.
- It is an **especial identity of any region, town or state**.

- The tag is given in the name of certain products or signs which **symbolize the uniqueness of that particular area.**
- When a particular product is given a GI tag, it certifies that the product is made using traditional methods, has special properties.
- Geographical Indication came into force on **15 September 2003.**
- **Darjeeling tea** was given the **first GI tag in India in 2004-2005.**
- GI tag is given to products related to **agriculture, handicrafts, food items, spirit drinks and industrial products.**
- India has more than **300 Geographical Indications** as of now.
- The rules and regulations of the GI tag are governed by the **World Trade Organization Agreement** on the Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights at the international level.

3. UP govt to set up UP Education Service Selection Commission for appointment of teachers (April 5, 2023)

The UP government has decided to set up the Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission

The UP government has **decided to set up the Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission** for the recruitment of teachers in the state.

An overview of the news

- Chief Minister **Yogi Adityanath** gave necessary guidelines regarding the setting up of the **Autonomous Commission** in a review meeting on 4 April.
- CM gave necessary guidelines regarding the formation of '**Uttar Pradesh Siksha Seva Chayan Ayog**' (Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission) as an integrated commission for the selection of candidates.
- Currently, separate authorities, boards and commissions select these teachers.

Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission

- The **Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission** will be constituted as a **corporate and integrated body** of teachers' selection commissions.
- The commission will prove to be useful in ensuring a **time-bound selection process, better utilisation of human resources and financial discipline.**
- This commission will select teachers in **basic, secondary, higher and technical colleges** of the state.

- The new commission will also conduct the **UP Teacher Eligibility Test (UPTET) exam.**

Composition of the Commission

- The **Vice-Chancellor of Universities or a person with long experience in the Indian Administrative Service** will be the chairman of the new integrated commission.
- **Senior judges and experienced educationists** will be its members.
- **Other backward classes, scheduled castes/tribes, women and minorities** will also be represented in the commission.

4. New butterfly species discovered in Kerala (April 4, 2023)

New butterfly species discovered in Kerala

Recently, a group of researchers discovered a **butterfly subspecies** from the fringes of **Akkulam and Vembanad lakes in Kerala.**

An overview of the news

- The name of this subspecies of discovered butterfly is **Caltoris bromus Sadashiv.**
- It belongs to the skipper butterfly family of **Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies).**
- It is the first Bromus swift butterfly to be documented in the **Western Ghats.**
- **Caltoris is an Indo-Australian genus** with more than **15 species** found in **Southeast Asia.**
- **Caltoris bromus** is one of them and its two other subspecies are **Caltoris bromus bromus and Caltoris bromus yanuka.**

About Vembanad Lake

- It is the **largest lake in Kerala and the longest lake in India.**
- The source of the lake is related to four rivers - **Meenachil, Achankovil, Pampa and Manimala.**
- The **Vallam Kali** (Nehru Trophy Boat Race) is a snake boat race held every year in August in **Vembanad Lake.**
- In the **year 2002**, it was included in the list of **wetlands of international importance as defined by the Ramsar Convention.**
- The Government of India has identified the Vembanad wetlands under the **National Wetlands Conservation Programme.**

5. Eravikulam National Park got a fernarium for the first time (April 4, 2023)

Eravikulam National Park got a fernarium for the first time

Eravikulam National Park in Munnar, Kerala has a new attraction – a fernarium and it is the first fern collection set up in a hill station.

An Overview of the News

- The **Fernarium** is **located within the park close to the Orchidarium** and is accessible to the public from 20 April.
- The objective of the **Fernarium is to educate visitors about the biodiversity of the park and to showcase the flora in a unique way.**
- Ferns grow naturally in a soilless environment by absorbing water and nutrients from trees, making the park an ideal location for a fernarium.

About Eravikulam National Park:

- **Location:** Eravikulam National Park is located in the Western Ghats of India, within the state of Kerala.
- **History:** The park was initially established as a game sanctuary in 1975, with the primary objective of protecting the endangered Nilgiri tahr, a type of mountain goat that is endemic to the Western Ghats.
- **National Park Status:** In 1978, the sanctuary was declared a National Park and now it is spread over an area of 97 square kilometres.
- **Biodiversity:** The park is famous for its rich biodiversity, which houses a number of wildlife species including Nilgiri Tahr, Macaque, Leopard and many bird species.
- **Recognition:** The park has received international recognition for its conservation efforts, and was awarded the prestigious Green Globe certification in 2019 for its commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism.

6. Himachal Pradesh's Kangra tea gets European GI tag (April 1, 2023)

The **European Commission (EC)** has recently **granted Protected Geographical Indication (PGI)** status to **Kangra tea**, a **unique variety of tea grown in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh** in India.

An Overview of the News

- According to the notification issued by the Election Commission on March 22, the **PGI status will be effective from April 11, 2023** and will help protect the authenticity and **quality of Kangra tea in the European market.**

- This is a **significant achievement for Kangra tea**, as it joins the list of other Indian products such as Darjeeling tea, Basmati rice and Pashmina shawls, which have been accorded the same status in the European Union.

About Kangra Tea

- It was first introduced in the **mid-19th century by Dr. Jameson**, a British civil surgeon who sowed **tea seeds in the Kangra Valley**.
- **In 1882**, the **Kangra tea garden won a gold medal at the Calcutta Exhibition**, further enhancing its prestige.
- A disease known as "**orange rust**" destroyed many tea gardens in the early 20th century, leading to a decline in the industry.

About the European Commission (EC)

- It is the executive branch of the **European Union (EU)** and serves as its administrative body.
- The President of the Commission is elected by the **European Parliament and appointed by the European Council**.
- The Commission is **headquartered in Brussels, Belgium** and has a staff of **approximately 32,000 employees**.
- The Commission ensures that EU laws and policies are implemented correctly and that Member States follow EU rules.
- The Commission cooperates with other **EU institutions, such as the European Council and the European Parliament, to shape EU** policies and legislation.
- The Commission's decisions are subject to oversight by the **European Court of Justice**, which interprets and applies EU law.

About Himachal Pradesh

Capital- **Shimla (Summer), Dharamshala (Winter)**

Chief Minister- **Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu**

Governor- **Shiv Pratap Shukla**

7. Haryana becomes first state in India to have 100% electrified railway network (March 31, 2023)

Haryana becomes first state in India to have 100% electrified railway network

Indian Railways has successfully completed **100% electrification of railway network in the state of Haryana** in March 2023 and with this achievement, Haryana has become the first state in India to have 100% electrified railway network.

An Overview of the News

- The electrification project covers the existing **broad gauge network of 1,701 route kilometres in Haryana.**
- The completion of this **project will reduce the dependence of Indian Railways on imported crude oil and also save foreign exchange.**
- Electrification of Railways will help **reduce carbon emissions and contribute towards the goal of a sustainable and environment-friendly** transport system in India.
- Indian Railways is working towards achieving **100% electrification** of its railway network in the country to increase efficiency, reduce dependence on fossil fuels and promote clean energy sources.
- Electrification of the railway network will also significantly reduce air pollution caused by diesel locomotives, thereby improving air quality.

About Indian Railways

- It is one of the **largest railway networks in the world** and was **established in 1853** during **British colonial rule.**
- Indian Railways covers a vast network of **over 67,000 km**, connecting almost every corner of the country.
- It operates a variety of trains including **local passenger trains, express trains, superfast trains and luxury trains.**

8. Srinagar-Leh's Z-Morh tunnel to be inaugurated in April (March 31, 2023)

Srinagar-Leh's Z-Morh tunnel to be inaugurated in April

The crucial **Z-Morh tunnel** that **connects Gagangir and Sonamarg** on the **Srinagar-Leh highway** will be **inaugurated in April 2023** according to Minister for Road Transport and Highways, **Nitin Gadkari.**

An overview of the news

- He said **nine tunnels** were being built between **Jammu and Srinagar** and **Asia's longest tunnel at Zojila** would also be ready by 2024.

About Z-Morh tunnel

- Zoji-Morh tunnel is an under-construction tunnel located in the Indian state of **Jammu and Kashmir.**
- It is a **6.5 km long tunnel between Gagangir and Sonamarg** on the **Srinagar-Leh highway.**

- The tunnel is being constructed at an **altitude of 11,578 feet** and will provide **all-weather connectivity to the Kashmir Valley**.
- The tunnel will have a **two-lane carriageway** which is being constructed using the **latest tunneling technology**.
- The project is being implemented by the **National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL)**.
- This tunnel will reduce the **travel time between Srinagar and Leh by about four hours**.

About Zojila Pass

- It is a **high mountain pass in Jammu and Kashmir**, located on **National Highway 1**.
- It connects **Srinagar in Kashmir Valley to Leh in Ladakh region**.
- It has an elevation of **about 3,528 metres (11,575 ft)**, and is the **second highest pass on the Srinagar-Leh National Highway after Photu La**.
- This is known as the '**Icy Storm Pass**'.
- The Zojila Tunnel project was started in the year 2018. It is **the longest and strategic bi-directional tunnel in Asia**.

9. World Bank approves \$363 million loan for clean drinking water in rural Karnataka (March 31, 2023)

World Bank approves \$363 million loan for clean drinking water in rural Karnataka

The **World Bank** has given a **\$363 million loan** to the state of **Karnataka** in India, which will help provide clean drinking water to two million rural households.

An Overview of the News

- It aims to establish piped water connections to households across the state, including **construction of drinking water distribution networks and installation of water metres, and the initiative** is expected to benefit around **10 million people in all 31 districts** of the state.
- The loan is part of the **Karnataka Sustainable Rural Water Supply programme**, which aims to improve the operational efficiency of rural water supply services.
- The World Bank loan has a special focus on promoting gender equality, as women typically bear the greatest burden of fetching water.
- The **program aims to revive 500 rural water reservoirs** in seven water-stressed districts, which will help increase water storage capacity and groundwater recharge.

- Around **3,000 rural women will receive on-the-job skill training** to be employed as plumbers.
- The program will strive to demonstrate **24/7 water supply service in at least 500 gram panchayats** and enhance the capacity of rural local governments to manage water supply services efficiently.

About the World Bank

- It is an **international financial institution**. It was **established in 1944** and is headquartered in **Washington, D.C.**
- The World Bank is made up of two institutions: **the IBRD and the IDA.**
- The Bank provides **loans, grants, policy advice and technical assistance to developing countries.**
- The World Bank Group includes other institutions such as the IFC and MIGA.
- The mission of the World Bank is **to help countries achieve their development goals** and improve the lives of people around the world.

10. Assam's Tapoban NGO honoured with Children's Champion Award (March 29, 2023)

Assam's Tapoban NGO honoured with Children's Champion Award

The **Delhi Commission for Protection of Child Rights** conferred the **Assam-based Tapoban NGO** with the **Children's Champion Award 2023** and the award was presented in the **Health and Nutrition category.**

An Overview of the News

- **Kumud Kalita, founder-president of Tapoban** and a political **science teacher at a junior college of the school**, received the award from **Justice S Muralidhar, Chief Justice of Odisha High Court** in New Delhi.
- This NGO focuses on **supporting children with special needs and autism.**
- The **Children's Champion Award** recognizes individuals and organisations for their significant contribution to the welfare of children in areas such as education, justice, health, nutrition, sports and creative arts.
- Tapoban has been recognized in the **Health and Nutrition category** for its remarkable contribution to the welfare of children with special needs and children with autism.

About Tapoban

- Tapoban Pathshala, **established in 2005**, is an NGO based in **Assam.**

- It runs a care home for **18 differently-abled and orphaned children** and has
- helped over **700 children** so far.
 - **Chief Minister's Best Community Work Award in 2011** and Mr. Kalita receiving the **State Teacher Award in 2021.**