

BRANDING INDIA'S HERITAGE



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At the INDIA TODAY GI Samagam, commerce and industry minister **Piyush Goyal** laid emphasis on preserving India's treasures through Geographical Indications, highlighting their role in boosting the local economy and enhancing global recognition

Photographs by RAJWANT RAWAT, ARUN KUMAR, HARDIK CHHABRA



We have a very ambitious plan...we have set a target to increase the GI registrations from 605 to 10,000 by 2030

In the next five years, can we take the story of GI to every state and Union territory, can we take it to every district in this country because there are hidden gems and hidden jewels in the remotest parts of India?

From granting 6,000 patents in 2014, one lakh patents were granted last year, that's the growth story of India

It will be a whole-of-government approach, spreading the message of GI products across the nation



PIYUSH GOYAL
Union Minister of Commerce and Industry

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There is no country richer than India when it comes to traditions, customs and heritage. We are a people blessed with immense diversity in our food, textile and handicraft. Protecting and preserving these treasures is of utmost importance, something Union commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal could not emphasise enough at the inaugural

INDIA TODAY GI Samagam held in Delhi.

An area that nobody thought worth consideration post-Independence—the intellectual property ecosystem—including patents, copyrights, trademarks and GIs—received a strong push in the Narendra Modi-led regime since 2014. From just 200 GI-tagged products [in 2014], we have 605 today. Similarly, authorised users for GI tags have risen from 365 in 2014 to 29,000 last year. Annual patent grants have surged from 6,000 in 2014 to 100,000 in 2024. "This is the growth story of India," Goyal said.

The aspiration over the next five years, the minister stressed, should be

to take the GI story to every state, Union territory and district in the country, given that there are hidden gems in the remotest corners of India. He, in fact, announced an ambitious target: reaching 10,000 GI registrations by 2030. To support this effort, a committee will be notified to oversee the identification of products and the creation of the ecosystem around them.

State governments, district collectors and organisations such as the Spices Board, Tobacco Board, Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, Development Commissioners of Handicrafts and Handloom, and the Textiles Committee, among others, will also be involved. "It will be a whole-of-government approach, spreading this message across the nation," Goyal said. Bold the target may be, but the minister said it is achievable given the growing interest in these products, guidance from PM Modi and the recent sanction to hire 1,000 personnel in the department. "We will equip them with the most modern technology. Everything is moving online," he said.

On the government's initiatives, the minister mentioned the creation of a dedicated section for GI-tagged products on the Government e-Marketplace. Government departments will be encouraged to procure GI-tagged products. Indian embassies worldwide can also promote ODOP (One District, One Product) and GI products. Additionally, ONDC (Open Network for Digital Commerce) will feature a dedicated section for GI products, and e-tailers will be encouraged to promote traditional Indian items. "There is also a need to promote the GI mark, brand it strongly and establish a simplified mechanism for genuine producers to obtain a hologram mark or similar certification to distinguish authentic products from counterfeits," he said.

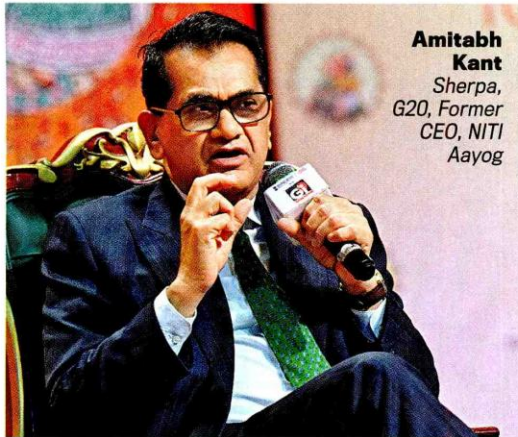
Already, the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade has collaborated with MasterChef India to promote the unique flavours and culinary traditions of different Indian regions, enhancing the brand value and consumer awareness of GI food products. ■

— Sonal Khetarpal



▼ CRYSTAL GAZE: GI BOOSTER FOR GLOBAL MARKETS

This insightful discussion showcased a compelling vision for leveraging GI products to propel India into global markets. Amitabh Kant, India's G20 Sherpa and former NITI Aayog CEO, outlined the untapped potential of the country's diverse GI-tagged products, emphasising branding, packaging and digital retail to catalyse their global appeal.



Amitabh Kant
Sherpa,
G20, Former
CEO, NITI
Aayog

TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Diluting the exclusivity of GIs undermines their global value and economic potential
- 2 GI products need superior packaging to compete globally and attract premium markets
- 3 E-commerce platforms like Flipkart and Amazon are essential for product accessibility and scaling
- 4 State-level hubs can spotlight artisans and increase GI product visibility
- 5 Positioning Kashmiri Pashmina as a high-value global product illustrates the transformative potential of branding

THE MARK OF ORIGIN

Geographical Indications or GIs protect unique regional products, preserving cultural heritage while boosting local economies and global recognition

What is Geographical Indication?

A GI is a sign used on products—such as handicrafts, handloom items, manufactured goods, textiles and agricultural produce—that originate from a specific geographical region and possess qualities or unique characteristics attributable to their origin. GIs are also considered a form of intellectual property rights (IPR)

MADHYA PRADESH

Ratlami Sev, Morena Gajak, Jhabua Kadaknath Black Chicken Meat



GUJARAT

Kutch Embroidery, Jamnagari Bandhani, Patan Patola, Mata ni Pachhedi, Bharuch Sujani Weaving



605

NUMBER OF
GI-TAGGED
PRODUCTS IN THE
COUNTRY AS OF
JANUARY 2025



Key products with GI tags

HIMACHAL PRADESH

Kangra Tea,
Himachali Kala Zeera



UTTAR PRADESH

Banaras Zardozi,
Aligarh Tala,
Mainpuri Tarkashi,
Varanasi Wooden
Lacquerware & Toys,
Pilibhit Bansuri



ASSAM

Muga Silk,
Majuli Masks,
Bihu Dhol



KARNATAKA

Mysore Agarbathi,
Mysore Sandalwood Oil,
Mysore Sandal Soap



ANDHRA PRADESH

Guntur
Sannam Chilli



Benefits of a GI tag

- Protecting the skills, traditions and knowledge handed down through generations by offering legal protection to unique products
- Boosting the local economy by curbing the unauthorised creation or sale of imitation products, ensuring that only genuine producers profit from their investments and skills
- Enhancing the competitiveness of products in national and international markets through their association with specific geographies, thereby boosting exports
- Promoting tourism by attracting visitors eager to experience the rich customs and cultural heritage of different regions, while also creating employment opportunities

How to apply for a GI tag?

- Send three copies of the application to the Geographical Indications Registry office in Chennai
- Application can be filed by a legal practitioner or a registered agent
- Application should include details of the special characteristics and how those standards are maintained
- Three certified copies of the map of the region of the GI product should be included
- The application is then scrutinised by experts who verify the facts and issue an Examination Report
- If the Registrar has any objection to the application, they will communicate so and the applicant should respond within two months or apply for a hearing
- Every application, within three months of acceptance, gets published in the *Geographical Indications Journal*
- On the acceptance of the application, the Registrar will register the GI and issue a certificate with the GI registry seal to the applicant

THE GEO-GI WARS: PRESERVING THE TERRITORY

"In India, we are actively pursuing FTAs. If MSMEs can be part of the negotiations, why can't GIs be? These agreements must look for mutual recognition as well as the protection of GIs"

AJAY SAHAI

Director General & CEO, Federation of Indian Export Organisations



"There's no 'GI war', but there's a need to recognise the co-existence of GIs across borders. When people migrated, they brought in their culture and traditional art forms. The larger Indian culture should be preserved"

PROF. UNNAT PANDIT

Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks and Registrar of GI



▼ TRADE: ADDING PREMIUM TO BRANDS OF BHARAT

TAKEAWAYS

1

Uttarakhand's success in obtaining 18 GI tags exemplifies how states can leverage biodiversity and collaborate with institutional partners to add significant value to local products

2

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)'s efforts in Basmati rice illustrate the necessity of robust traceability systems to protect GI-tagged products in international markets

3

QR codes and IT-enabled systems can authenticate GI-tagged products, enhancing their premium value and providing transparency for global consumers

4

The Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)'s initiatives in modernising tribal



From left, **Ramsinh Rathwa**, Chairman, TRIFED; **Roop Rash India**; **Vinay Kumar**, MD, Uttarakhand Organic Commodity Board

▼ COMMERCIALISATION AND BRANDING OF GI



"There is a need for decentralisation in GI registration and greater state involvement. There is a need for creating a GI promotion board and categorising GI products for export readiness"

RAJENDRA RATNOO

Executive Director, National Institute of Disaster Management and ex-Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks

▼ GLOBALISATION: GI E

"While the process of granting GI tags should be robust and strict, we also need to ensure that genuine producers and producing regions are not excluded from the process"

AKASH BADAWE, CEO, Bhoomgaadi Organic FPC



"Government initiatives around GIs, like the Millet Mission, can help spread awareness. If there can be a GI campaign where it stands for greatness of India, it can help fuel the consumer demand"

ANUJ RUSTAGI
COO, ITC Foods



Textile Commissioner & Vice Chairperson, Textiles Committee, Govt. of
Shishir Dev, Chairman, APEDA

products demonstrate the importance of maintaining authenticity while innovating to meet global market standards

5

GI tagging is not merely a branding exercise but a pathway to preserving cultural heritage and ensuring economic sustainability for artisans and farmers

TERS FOR BRANDS FROM BHARAT

“Consumers are looking for products that are authentic, ethically sourced, sustainable, and good for the environment. There’s also an element of storytelling involved, and that’s what we are trying to communicate to our customers—that we embody all these values”

AMBUJ NARAYAN
 CEO, Taneira



“A lot of investment is coming from corporations, government initiatives and CSR. However, most of it is being directed toward production or building entrepreneurs. Investments are equally needed in building a new consumer base and creating new demand”

NITIN PAMNANI
 Co-founder, iTokri

▼ TAGGING TRIUMPHS: GI AS NORTHEAST'S ENTERPRISE ENGINE



James Sangma
 Chairman, Meghalaya
 Industrial Development
 Corporation; former cabinet
 minister, Meghalaya

TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Products like Lakadong turmeric have transformed rural livelihoods by creating market linkages and fostering global demand
- 2 GI tags ensure the protection and promotion of traditional processes and cultural narratives
- 3 Meghalaya faces challenges in addressing the proliferation of fake GI-tagged products, underscoring the need for awareness and enforcement
- 4 Enhanced infrastructure and mission-mode programmes are vital to unlocking the full potential of Northeast India's GI products
- 5 A synergistic approach involving government, private sector and community efforts can bridge gaps and scale economic opportunities



▼ LEVERAGING BRAND VALUE OF GIs IN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETS



“Even though we say GIs can add value, it can deepen the engagement of rural communities and local actors, and activate collaborations, but we still do not have many examples to support this. We would like to do this, but there's actually very little empirical evidence from India”

“Everyone's coming to India for its huge domestic market. We can just fulfill the market requirements within our own country and then we can look out. I think that's a really clean way of looking at things”

HIMANI PANDE

Additional Secretary, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Govt. of India

▼ THE GI BRIGADE



TAKEAWAYS

- 1 GI tagging must move beyond registration to commercialisation, ensuring premium pricing and better livelihoods for producers through initiatives like cultural entrepreneurship
- 2 India's GI laws require tightening, including pre-registration checks and registrant accountability, to ensure quality control and prevent the market flooding with counterfeit products

▼ PECHAKUCHA: PRESERVING VIRASAT



“One of the biggest threats to food heritage today is counterfeit. So GI tagging helps us in preserving this by providing legal protection against it”

MANISHA BHASIN
Corporate Chef, ITC Hotels



“India has more than 55 types of art forms which are there, which are registered, but I think there are more than hundreds which need to be registered”

MANISHA JHA
Artist

ENABLING INDIA'S INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY



From left, **Lisa P. Lukose**, Professor of Law and Director, Legal Aid, Guru Gobind Singh IP University; **Ganesh Hingmire**, Founder and Chairman, Great Mission Group Society; **Latha R. Nair**, K&S Partners

- 3 Universities and research institutions can play a pivotal role in providing historical evidence, scientific validation and technical guidance for robust GI applications
- 4 Consumers should adopt the 'Har Ghar, GI Ghar' philosophy to create demand for GI-tagged products, fostering grass-roots economic growth
- 5 Introducing post-registration inspections and annual reports can maintain product integrity and enhance the credibility of India's GI ecosystem

THROUGH GI TAGGING



"We move through cities without truly seeing them. We experience spaces without knowing their stories... What if that changed? What if our buildings carried a mark of their origin?"

TANYA KHANNA
Architect and Founder,
Epistle Communications

▼ THE POLICY STIMULI: UNLOCKING THE FUTURE POTENTIAL OF GI FOR BHARAT



"We are trying to make it easier for the farmers to not only file the GI tags for the crops, but also to get the authorised user certificate. There are experts, who are technically 'facilitators'; we must fund them"

DEVESH CHATURVEDI

Secretary,
Department of
Agriculture &
Farmers' Welfare



"Kashi is a very unique city and model... It will be very difficult to replicate it. In fact, it should neither be desired nor pushed"

PARTHO SAHA

Chief General Manager,
Off Farm Development
Department, NABARD

"Kashi's GI journey started with Banarasi saree and brocades in 2006. It captures three Cs—culture, craft and cuisine—to build on the region's heritage"

PROF. RAJNI KANT

Gen. Secy, Human
Welfare Association,
Varanasi

"GI registry is one step. The ecosystem should also be developed to ensure that the economic benefits of cultural heritage reach exactly where they are intended to"

GOPAL KRISHNA AGARWAL

National Spokesperson,
BJP

"GI tag evokes respect in the minds of prospective buyers, and premium prices can be commanded. The Kashi model had demonstrated the same"

DR RAJENDRA PRASAD SHARMA

Prof. of Marketing, Indian
Institute of Foreign Trade

▼ TAKING GI FROM GLOCAL TO GLOBAL

"One can use social media and technology to tell a compelling story to a wider audience and help the next generation be aware of the wonderful work that happens in the country"

NISHANT CHANDRA

Director,
Carpet Cellar



"We've had a national policy for coals, agriculture, mines but not culture. India needs a cultural policy to give its culture structure, substance and synergy"

ASHISH KHOKAR

Expert on cultural
policy

▼ HOW GI TAGS CAN TRANSFORM INDIAN SPIRITS AND LIQUOR

TAKEAWAYS

- 1 Indian single malt whisky producers are working to obtain a GI tag, having developed internal standards
- 2 Giving GI tags to Indian spirits and alcohol will improve credibility and global recognition. It will also incentivise manufacturers to maintain high quality standards
- 3 Tribal liquor mahua and Indian rum are identified as promising spirits with potential for international success were they to receive a GI tag
- 4 Despite a GI tag, Indian wine has not been able to weave a story compelling enough to make the most of the certification



Sandeep Arora, whisky & spirits ambassador (left), **Rajnish Singh**, founder, Dhvaen Law Practice

▼ FIRESIDE CHAT: BUILDING BRANDS ON GI

"This opportunity is widening as there are 605 brands or GI-tagged products in this category but width is not the only thing. The depth is missing at this point of time and that is my core worry"

HARISH BIJOOR
Founder, Harish Bijoer Consults Inc.

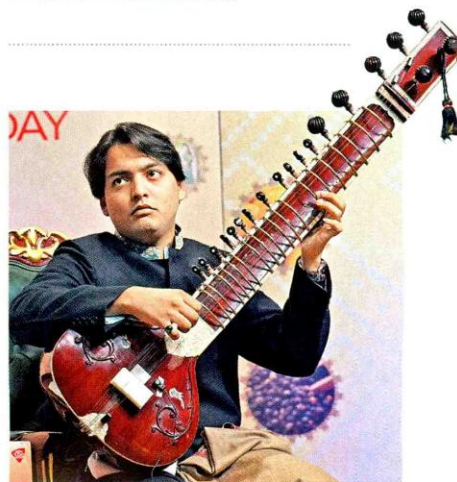


▼ GI MUSIC: THE GI TAG MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS MEET FOR A COLLABORATION



"We need more takers for the GI-tagged shehnai. Currently, there are more foreigners learning this instrument. We need to keep the *parampara* alive and the continuity of this instrument. The government needs to take this up and encourage youngsters to learn and master the shehnai"

SANJEEV SHANKAR, Shehnai maestro



"Giving GI tag to the sitar is akin to giving the Bharat Ratna to this instrument. GI tag is a badge of honour—made in India and performed globally"

MEHTAB NIAZI, Sitar player