

## Status of Geographical Indications in the Northeast Region of India

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Geographical Indications (GI) is considered as a tool for providing legal protection to goods originated or manufactured from particular geographical location during trade. Till now, Northeast region of India had 35 goods registered under GI which accounted only 7.9% of total number of goods registered under GI in India. The GI registration in Northeast region of India has been started since 2007 and the highest number of registrations was found in 2014 (35.48 %) and lowest in 2007, 2016, 2017 and 2018 (3.23 %). Assam had the highest number of GI goods i.e., 10 goods that accounted for 28 %, followed by Mizoram (20 %), Manipur (20 %), Nagaland (11 %) and the other states (21 %). Most of the GI registrations were done for Class 25 (clothing-traditional attire) that accounted for 38.71%, followed by Class 31 (32.26 %), Class 30 (29.03 %) etc. However, only 25.7 % of goods registered in Part B of GI were Assam (orthodox), *Bokachaul*, *Chak Hao*, *Idu Mishmi* textile, *Joha rice*, *Muga* silk, *Mizo chilli*, *Naga Mirchi* and Sikkim large cardamom. This region has high potential to register many goods under GI because of high cultural diversity, diverse ethnicity, rich biodiversity and indigenous knowledge system.

**Keywords:** Geographical Indications, Paris Convention, TRIPS Agreement, Northeast Region of India, GI Registrations

Geographical Indications (GI) is a type of intellectual property right (IPR) that provides legal protection against infringement to goods originated or manufactured from a geographical area.<sup>1</sup> GI came into existence due to the effort of various organizations such as World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), World Trade Organisation (WTO), etc. whereas Paris Conventions, Madrid agreement, Lisbon agreement and Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement also play an instrumental role in materialising GI in worldwide trading. For instance, Article 1(2) of Paris Convention 1883 gives priority on *Indications of Source* wherein contracting state must take proper measure against false identification of the source of goods during trade. Similarly, two multilateral agreements viz., Madrid Agreement 1891 and Lisbon Agreement 1958 also emphasise on the protection of *indications of source*, which is similar to GI concept in trading.

WIPO is an agency that deals especially on Intellectual Property Right (IPR). It is an integral part of United Nations and plays an important role in recognising GI world widely.<sup>1</sup> In 1994, TRIPS Agreement of World Trade Organisation (WTO) recognised GI as a type of IPR world widely and it came into effect from 1 January 1995. On 22 December 1995

there was an agreement between WIPO and WTO that emphasised to assist developing countries to implement the provisions of TRIPS in various aspects viz., legal technical assistance and technical cooperation. However, this agreement entered into force on 1 January 1996.

Geographical Indication is defined based on Article 22(1) of TRIPS 1994 as “*Indications which identify a good as originating in the territory of a member, or a region in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the good is essentially attributable to its geographical origin.*” Whereas in India, GI is defined based on section 2(e) of Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act 1999 as “*an indication which identifies such goods as agricultural goods, natural goods or manufactured goods as originating, or manufactured in the territory of a country, or a region or locality in that territory, where a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of such goods is essentially attributable to its geographical origin and in case where such goods are manufactured goods one of the activities of either the production or of processing or preparation of the goods concerned takes place in such territory, region or locality, as the case may be.*” Herein indications denote any name or figural that conveys geographical origin of goods based on Section 2 (g) of Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.<sup>2</sup>

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In India, the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks are designated as the Registrar of GI and its main office is located in Chennai. Based on Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Rules, 2002, the registration of GI is done with form number GI-1 along with prescribed fee to the Registrar of Geographical Indications. Whereas, form GI-5 under rule 22 is used for application of search with payment of prescribed fees wherein they check resemblance with other records in trade mark or GI. Besides, form GI-2A along with prescribed fees is used to oppose the GI registration within three months after the application made available in the public domain.<sup>3</sup> The GI registration is generally done in two ways i.e., Part A and Part B. Part A deals with registration of both product and its logo for 10 years period which can be renewed periodically whereas Part B (Form GI-3) deals with registration of producer or authorised users of GI tag product.<sup>3</sup> In India, Part B registration was found to be underutilised in some cases mostly due to ignorance among the rural manufacturer or producers regarding the benefits of GI registration in trading and this gap can be taken care by conducting awareness programme on time.<sup>4</sup> Besides, Govt. of India also tried to boost GI through promoting Agriculture Export Policy(2018) wherein the highest priority was given to promote GI registration, marketing and promotion of “Brand India” for export of agri-products.<sup>5</sup>

In India, Darjeeling tea is the first GI registered by TEA Board, Kolkata under Class 30 (one of the classification of goods) for tea grown in 87 gardens in Darjeeling district of West Bengal. In total, 443 goods were registered under GI in India based on section 2(f) of Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act 1999 till 21<sup>st</sup> October 2022.<sup>6,7</sup> This registration enables protection of the intellectual property right (IPR) of local communities and also helps to stop unauthorised use of GI by others. It will be a boon to rural population

as it may improve the economic opportunity in rural area, increase scope of price premium and also reduces uncertainty of quality of its product.<sup>8</sup> Besides, GI also helps agricultural sectors to boost export through branding agro-products with GI tags because consumers prefer GI goods as compared to non-branded one. It also acts as an instrument for export differentiation.<sup>4,9</sup>

Northeast region of India consists of eight states viz., Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura which have diverse ethnicity with 145 schedule tribes co-existed with a population of 1.27 crore which is 12.18% of total ST population in India (705 Schedule tribes and 10.43 crore population).<sup>10-12</sup> Physiographically this region is diverse and is categorised as Brahmaputra plain, Barak valley plain, Eastern Himalaya and Northeast hills (Patkai-Naga Hills and Lushai Hills). This region is an integral part of Indo Burma Hotspot and also prioritised as Global 200 Eco region by WWF.<sup>13</sup> It is also identified as centre of rice germplasm,<sup>14</sup> natural home of *Citrus* spp.,<sup>15-18</sup> “Hindustani centre of origin of cultivated plants”<sup>19</sup> and wild relatives of crop plants.<sup>20</sup> Being a mega cultural landscape with diverse ethnicity, the people possess distinct indigenous knowledge systems in various aspects such as traditional farming system, agro forestry system, material culture, ethnobotany, etc. which need protection world widely during trade through GI tagging and it may act as a tool to improve the socio-economic condition of diverse ethnic communities in NE India.

### Status of GI Registration in NE India

In Northeast region of India, 35 goods were registered under Part A of GI till 21 October 2022 (Table 1).

The registration of goods under Part A of GI in NE India has been started since 2007. The highest GI registration was found in the year 2014 with 35.48%,

Table 1— GI goods under Part A in NE India<sup>21</sup>

| S. no. | GI goods (Scientific name)                              | Types of goods                          | Application no. | State             | Applicants                                                                                      | Year |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1      | Arunachal Orange<br>( <i>Citrus reticulata</i> Blanco.) | Class-31-Horticulture products (Fruits) | 375             | Arunachal Pradesh | North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited (NERAMAC), Guwahati, Assam    | 2014 |
| 2      | Idu Mishmi Textiles                                     | Class 25-Textiles                       | 625             | Arunachal Pradesh | Idu Mishmi Cultural and Literary Society (IMCLS), Roing, Lower Dibang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh | 2019 |

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Table 1— GI goods under Part A in NE India<sup>21</sup>

| S. no. GI goods (Scientific name)                               | Types of goods                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Application State no.                   | Applicants                                                                                                                                                                                        | Year |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 3 Muga silk of Assam                                            | Class 23-Raw silk yarns and threads for textile use; Class-24- Textile and textile goods including Mekhla-chadar, shawls, dress materials, sarees, wall hangings; Class-25-Clothing/ Garment, foot wears, head gear, Made ups, ties, motifs, fashion wears; Class-27-Quilt furnishing & Upholstery; Class 31-Cocoon. | 55 & 384* Assam * Muga silk logo (2014) | Patent Information Centre, ASTEC, Assam Science Technology and Environment Council (ASTEC), 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, City Co-operative Building, U.N.B. Road, Silpukhuri, Guwahati-781003, Assam    | 2007 |
| 4 Gamosa                                                        | Class 25-Clothing                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 594 Assam                               | Institute of Handicraft Development, Dhodang, Golaghat, Assam<br>Facilitated by:<br>Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam                                                                  | 2019 |
| Gamosa of Assam                                                 | Class-24-Textiles and textile goods.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 594 Assam                               | Directorate of Handloom & Textiles, Assam<br>Facilitate by:<br>Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam<br>Patent Information Centre, Assam Science Technology & Environment, Guwahati, Assam | 2022 |
| 5 Assam (Orthodox)                                              | Class-30- Tea                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 115 & 118 Assam                         | Tea Board, 14, B.T.M. Sarani, Brabourne Road, 6Kolkata, West Bengal                                                                                                                               | 2008 |
| 6 Joha Rice of Assam                                            | Class-30-Rice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 439 Assam                               | 1. Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam<br>2. SeujSatirtha, Central Cultural Building, Kachumari, Sivasagar, Assam                                                                        | 2016 |
| 7 Boka Chaul                                                    | Class-30-Rice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 558 Assam                               | 1. Lotus Progressive Centre (LPC), Morowa, Nalbari, Assam<br>2. Centre for Environment Education (CEE), CEE North East, Chenikuthi, Guwahati, Assam                                               | 2018 |
| 8 Chokuwa Rice of Assam                                         | Class-30-Rice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 572 Assam                               | SeujSatirth, Sivsagar, Assam<br>Facilitated by:<br>Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam                                                                                                   | 2019 |
| 9 Assam Karbi Anglong Ginger ( <i>Zingiberofficinale</i> Rosc.) | Class-30-Spices-Ginger                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 435 Assam                               | NERAMAC                                                                                                                                                                                           | 2014 |
| 10 Tezpur Litchi ( <i>Litchi chinensis</i> Sonn.)               | Class-31-Horticultural products (Fruits)-Litchi                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 438 Assam                               | NERAMAC                                                                                                                                                                                           | 2014 |
| 11 Kaji Nemu ( <i>Citrus limon</i> )                            | Class 31-Horticulture products (Fruits)-Lemon                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 609 Assam                               | Crs-Na-DihingNemuTengaUnnayan Samity, DiramukhThepabari, Post: Hahkhathi, Tinsukia, Assam, India.<br>Facilitate by:<br>Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam                               | 2019 |

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Table 1— GI goods under Part A in NE India<sup>21</sup>

| S. no. | GI goods (Scientific name)                                                   | Types of goods                                              | Application no. | State     | Applicants                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Year |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 12     | Judima                                                                       | Class 33-Alcoholic Beverages (Expect Beer)<br>Made of Rice  | 643             | Assam     | DIMAJIK HOSOM, Dibrari village, Haflong, Dima Hasao, Assam, India<br>Facilitated by<br>1. Youth Association for Development & Empowerment (YADEM)<br>2. Assam Agricultural University                                 | 2020 |
| 13     | Wangkhei Phee                                                                | Class 25 Clothing                                           | 375             | Manipur   | Department of Commerce & Industries, Govt. of Manipur, India                                                                                                                                                          | 2013 |
| 14     | MoirangPhee                                                                  | Class 25 Clothing                                           | 373             | Manipur   | Department of Commerce & Industries, Govt. of Manipur, India                                                                                                                                                          | 2013 |
| 15     | Shaphee Lanphee                                                              | Class 25 Clothing                                           | 371             | Manipur   | Department of Commerce & Industries, Govt. of Manipur, India                                                                                                                                                          | 2014 |
| 16     | Chak-Hao (Black rice)<br>( <i>Oryza sativa</i> L. subspecies <i>Indica</i> ) | Class 30-Rice (Black Rice)                                  | 602             | Manipur   | Consortium of Producers of Chak-Hao (Black Rice), Manipur<br>Facilitated by:<br>1. Department of Agriculture, Government of Manipur<br>2. North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited (NERAMAC) | 2019 |
| 17     | Hathei Chilli<br>( <i>Capsicum annuum</i> L.)                                | Class-30-Chilli                                             | 592             | Manipur   | Manipur Organic Mission Agency (MOMA), Directorate of Horticulture, Imphal, Manipur                                                                                                                                   | 2020 |
| 18     | Tameng long Orange<br>( <i>Citrus reticulata</i> )                           | Class 31-Orange                                             | 590             | Manipur   | Manipur Organic Mission Agency (MOMA), Directorate of Horticulture, Sanjenthong, Imphal, Manipur                                                                                                                      | 2020 |
| 19     | Kachai Lemon<br>( <i>Citrus jambhiri</i> Lush.)                              | Class 31-Horticulture products (Fruits)-Lemon               | 466             | Manipur   | NERAMAC                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 2014 |
| 20     | Khasi Mandarin<br>( <i>Citrus rediculata</i> Blanco.)                        | Class-31-Horticulture products (Fruits)-Orange              | 465             | Meghalaya | NERAMAC                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 2014 |
| 21     | Memong Narang                                                                | Class 31 Horticulture products (Fruits)-Citrus (Orange)     | 437             | Meghalaya | NERAMAC                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 2014 |
| 22     | Hmaram                                                                       | Class- 24-Textiles and textile goods,<br>Class-25-Clothing. | 588             | Mizoram   | Mizoram Art & Cultural Society                                                                                                                                                                                        | 2019 |
| 23     | Tawlhlohpuan                                                                 | Class- 24-Textiles and textile goods,<br>Class-25-Clothing. | 582             | Mizoram   | Mizoram Art & Cultural Society                                                                                                                                                                                        | 2019 |
| 24     | Mizo Puanchel                                                                | Class- 24-Textiles and textile goods,<br>Class-25-Clothing. | 583             | Mizoram   | Mizoram Art & Cultural Society                                                                                                                                                                                        | 2019 |
| 25     | Ngotekherh                                                                   | Class- 24-Textiles and textile goods.<br>Class-25-Clothing  | 587             | Mizoram   | Mizoram Art & Cultural Society, Directorate of Art & Culture Department Building, Chanmari, Aizwal, Mizoram                                                                                                           | 2019 |
| 26     | Pawndum                                                                      | Class-24-Textiles and textile goods.<br>Class 25 Clothing   | 586             | Mizoram   | Mizoram Art & Cultural Society                                                                                                                                                                                        | 2019 |
| 27     | Mizo Chilli<br>( <i>Capsicum frutescens</i> L.)                              | Class-30-Spices-Chilli                                      | 377             | Mizoram   | NERAMAC                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 2014 |
| 28     | Mizo Ginger<br>( <i>Zingiber officinale</i> Rosc.)                           | Class-30-Ginger                                             | 629             | Mizoram   | Mizoram Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium, Aizawl-796001, Mizoram<br>Facilitated by:<br>Department of Horticulture, Government of Mizoram                                                                         | 2021 |

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Table 1— GI goods under Part A in NE India<sup>21</sup>

| S. no. | GI goods (Scientific name)                                                                     | Types of goods                                    | Application no. | State                                                     | Applicants                                                                                   | Year        |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 29     | Chakshesang Shawl                                                                              | Class-24, 25 & 27 Textiles                        | 542             | Nagaland                                                  | Chakshesang Women Welfare Society, Pfuistero, Phek district, Nagaland                        | 2017        |
| 30     | Naga Tree Tomato ( <i>Solanum betaceum</i> Cav.)                                               | Class 31-Horticultural Product                    | 374             | Nagaland                                                  | NERAMAC                                                                                      | 2014        |
| 31     | Naga Mircha ( <i>Capsicum annuum</i> L., <i>Capsicum frutescens</i> L., <i>Capsicum. sp.</i> ) | Class 31 Chilli                                   | 109             | Nagaland                                                  | The Secretary, Department of Horticulture & Agriculture, Govt. of Nagaland, Kohima, Nagaland | 2008        |
| 32     | Naga Cucumber ( <i>Cucumis sativus</i> L.)                                                     | Class 31-Cucumber                                 | 640             | Nagaland                                                  | North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC), Guwahati, Assam         | 2020        |
| 33     | Sikkim Large Cardamom ( <i>Amomum subulatum</i> Roxb.)                                         | Class-30-Spices-Cardamom                          | 376             | Sikkim                                                    | NERAMAC                                                                                      | 2014        |
| 34     | DalleKhursani ( <i>Capsicum annuum</i> var. <i>cerasiforme</i> )                               | Class-30 Chilli                                   | 636             | Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalimpong districts of West Bengal | North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC), Guwahati, Assam         | 2021 & 2020 |
| 35     | Tripura Queen Pineapple <i>Ananascomosus</i> (L.) Merr.                                        | Class-31-Horticulture products (Fruits)-Pineapple | 436             | Tripura                                                   | NERAMAC                                                                                      | 2014        |

Table 2 — Status of GI registration in North East India<sup>21</sup>

| Year | No. of GI goods registered | Name of goods                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Percentage |
|------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 2007 | 1                          | <i>Muga</i> silk of Assam                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 3.23%      |
| 2008 | 2                          | Assam (Orthodox) and Naga mircha                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 6.45%      |
| 2013 | 2                          | <i>Wangkhei Phee</i> and <i>Moirang Phee</i>                                                                                                                                                                                        | 6.45%      |
| 2014 | 11                         | Arunachal Orange, Tezpur Litchi, Assam Karbi Anglong Ginger, Khasi Mandarin, Mizo Chilli, Naga Tree Tomato, Sikkim, Large Cardamom, Tripura Queen Pineapple, <i>Kachai</i> Lemon, <i>Memong Narang</i> and <i>Shaphee Lanphee</i> . | 35.48%     |
| 2016 | 1                          | Joha Rice of Assam                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 3.23%      |
| 2017 | 1                          | <i>Chakshesang Shawl</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 3.23%      |
| 2018 | 1                          | <i>BokaChaul</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 3.23%      |
| 2019 | 10                         | <i>Chak-Hao</i> (Black rice), <i>Kaji Nemu</i> , <i>Idu Mishmi</i> Textiles, <i>Gamosa</i> , <i>Ngotekherh</i> , <i>Pawndum</i> , <i>Hmaram</i> , <i>Tawlhlohpuan</i> , <i>Mizo Puanchel</i> and <i>Chokuwa</i> Rice of Assam       | 32.26%     |
| 2020 | 5                          | <i>Judima</i> , <i>Hathei Chilli</i> , <i>Tamenglong</i> Orange, Naga Cucumber, <i>Dalle Khursani</i>                                                                                                                               | 3.23%      |
| 2021 | 1                          | Mizo Ginger                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 3.23%      |
|      | 35                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 100%       |

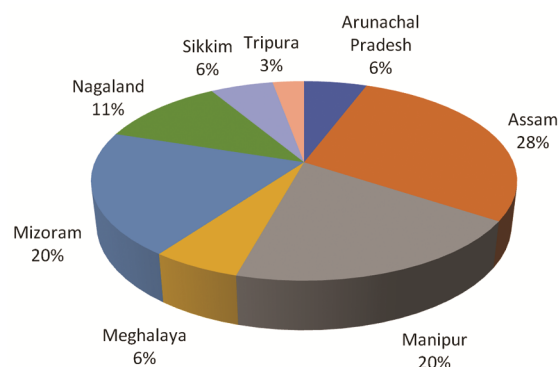
followed by 2019 (32.26%), 2008 (6.67%) etc. (Table 2).

In Northeast region of India, every state had GI registration. Among all, Assam had highest GI registered goods with 10 goods, followed by Mizoram (7), Manipur (7), Nagaland (4), Arunachal Pradesh (2), etc. (Fig. 1).

### Class of Goods Registered for GI

In North East India, there were six classes of goods viz., Class 23, 24, 25, 27, 30, 31 and 33 used to register 35 goods under GI (Table 3). The highest number of registrations of GI was done in Class 25 especially for

ethnic clothing that accounted for 38.71%, followed by Class 31 (32.26%), Class 30 (29.03%), Class 24 (25.81%) etc, (Table 3). There were 12 goods registered under Class 25 in 4 states i.e., 5 traditional attires viz., *Mizo Puanchel*, *Tawlhlohpuan*, *Hmaram*, *Pawndum* and *Ngotekherh* were registered from Mizoram; 3 traditional attires viz., *Moirang Phee*, *Shaphee Lanphee* and *Wangkhei Phee* from Manipur; 2 traditional attires viz., *Gamosa* and *Muga* silk from Assam and *Idu Mishmi* Textiles from Arunachal Pradesh. In Class 31 (Horticultural products and cocoon), there were 10 goods registered in 6 states i.e., 2 horticultural products and cocoon registered viz., Tezpur Litchi,

Fig. 1 — Distribution of GI registered goods in NE India<sup>21</sup>Table 3 — Classification of goods and their use frequency<sup>21</sup>

| Classes  | Goods                                          | No. of GI goods | Percentage |
|----------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Class 23 | Yarns and threads                              | 1               | 3.22%      |
| Class 24 | Textiles and textile goods                     | 8               | 25.81%     |
| Class 25 | Clothing, foot ware and headgear               | 12              | 38.71%     |
| Class 27 | Quilt furnishing & Upholstery                  | 2               | 6.45%      |
| Class 30 | Tea, rice, spices, etc.                        | 9               | 29.03%     |
| Class 31 | Horticultural (9), cocoon (1)                  | 10              | 32.26%     |
| Class 33 | Alcoholic Beverages (Except Beer) Made of Rice | 1               | 3.22%      |

*Kaji Nemu* and Cocoon from Assam; 2 horticultural products viz., *Khasi Mandarin* and *Memong Narang* from Meghalaya; 2 agricultural products viz., *Naga tree tomato* and *Naga mircha* (Nagaland); *Arunachal orange* (Arunachal Pradesh); *Kachai Lemon* (Manipur); and *Tripura queen pineapple* (Tripura).

### Organisations Involved in GI Registration

In North East India, there are 21 organisations consisted of both Governmental organisations and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) such as Assam Agricultural University, Assam; Department of Commerce & Industries, Manipur; Mizoram Art and Cultural Society, Mizoram; North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited, Assam; Department of Horticulture & Agriculture, Nagaland, etc.<sup>21</sup> actively involved in registration of textile, clothing, agricultural, horticultural, etc. goods or manufactured products under GI (Table 1 & 2). Among all organisations, North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited (NERAMAC), Guwahati, Assam had the highest GI registration with 13 goods that account for 37.14% mostly from both Class 30 and 31 (agricultural and horticultural products) viz., 2 each from Assam (Assam Karbi Ang long ginger and

Tezpur litchi), Manipur (*Kachai lemon* and *Chak-Hao*), Meghalaya (*Memongnarang* and *Khasi mandarin*), Nagaland (*Naga tree tomato* and *Naga cucumber*) and Sikkim (*Sikkim large cardamom* and *Dalle Khursani*), 1 each from Arunachal Pradesh (*Arunachal orange*), Mizoram (*Mizo chilli*) and Tripura (*Tripura queen pineapple*). Mizoram Art and Cultural Society had registered 5 goods under GI in Mizoram viz., *Ngotekherh*, *Pawndum*, *Hmaram*, *Tawlhlohpuan* and *Mizo Puanchel*. Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat plays an important role in registering 5 GI goods in Assam such as *Joha rice*, *Kaji Nemu*, *Chokuwa rice* and *Judima*. Whereas, Department of Commerce & Industries of Manipur registered 3 goods as GI in Manipur viz., *Wangkhei Phee*, *Moirang Phee* and *Shaphee Lanpheh*.

### Status of Part B Registration of GI

The Part B registration of GI is done to register producer or authorised manufacturer that provides exclusive right with legal protection and also facilitate fixing price of the goods. It also helps producer to get economic benefits such as through unique selling proposition (USP), etc.<sup>22, 23</sup> Herein, inspection body plays an important role to maintain the quality of the goods.<sup>21</sup>

Till now, only 9 goods were registered under GI especially for Part B in North East India such as *Idu Mishmi* textile of Arunachal Pradesh; Assam (orthodox), *Bokachaul*, *Muga* silk and *Joha* rice of Assam; *Chak Hao* of Manipur; *Mizo chilli* of Mizoram; *Naga mirchi* of Nagaland and *Sikkim large cardamom* of Sikkim and accounted for 25.7% of total goods registered in Part A i.e., 35 goods.<sup>21</sup> In *Muga* silk of Assam, the number of authorised manufacturer or producer registration was 272 and the registration started from 2012 to 21<sup>st</sup> October 2022. The highest number of registrations took place in the year 2016 with 52.94% followed by 2015 (34.26%), 2014 (5.19%), etc. This rise in registration in *Muga* silk during 2015 and 2016 in Assam may be due to the initiative taken by IPR cell of Tezpur University especially for *Muga* silk in Assam such as field visit followed by organising GI registration clinic cum outreach programme in Lakhimpur district during 2015 wherein 92 participants filled up the Part B form as producers which was later published in GI Registry in October 2015.<sup>24</sup> In Arunachal Pradesh, 33 producers had registered under Part B of GI for *Idu Mishmi* textile in 2020. This gradual increase in registration of producers may be due to an awareness program

conducted in Lower Dibang Valley on “significant of IPR and GI” on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2019 by Idu Mishmi Cultural and Literary Society’s (IMCLS) in which they emphasised on the registration of Part B of GI and benefits from GI tagging.<sup>25</sup> Besides, 4 authorised producer registered for Sikkim large cardamom, 2 with *Naga mirchi* and 1 each for Assam (orthodox), *Bokachaul*, *Chak Hao*, Joiha rice and *Mizo chilli*.

However, over all low registration of Part B of GI is a matter of concern for India in general and NE India in particular because the ethnic communities involved in producing GI tagged goods will not get the economic and legal benefits until they register themselves as producer or authorised manufacturer under Part B. This gap needs to be filled up through awareness or outreach programme at grassroot level.

#### **Organisation Involved with GI Awareness Program in NE India**

The Patent Information Centre (PIC) is established in every state of North East India under organisations like Arunachal Pradesh Council for Science & Technology, Assam Science Technology and Environment Council, Manipur Science and Technology Council, Tripura State Council for Science & Technology, Mizoram Science, Technology & Innovation Council, State Council of Science Technology & Environment, Meghalaya, Nagaland Science and Technology Council and Sikkim State Council of Science & Technology. The Patent Information Centre (PIC) plays an important role in promoting Intellectual Property Right (IPR) including GI in their respective states by organising awareness programmes and workshop and also established IPR cells in various educational institutes and universities.

Similar initiatives were under taken by Department of Forestry, NERIST to create awareness among grassroot level stakeholders on IPR including GI at village level in East Siang, Lower Subansiri, Longding, Papumpare and West Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh under National Mission on Himalayan Studies (NMHS) funded project from 2018 to 2021.<sup>25, 26</sup> Besides, Idu Mishmi Cultural and Literary Society’s (IMCLS) of Arunachal Pradesh conducted awareness programme and promote GI registration for producers under Part B.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Tezpur IPR cell conducted awareness program in Assam and promote Part B of GI registration for Muga silk of Assam.<sup>24</sup> These initiatives have made a good impact on enhancing the awareness of importance of GI among ethnic communities of NE India which may improve their socio-economic condition in near future.

#### **Conclusion**

In total, 35 goods were registered under Part A of Geographical Indications in the Northeast region of India. Among all, Assam had highest GI registered products, followed by Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, etc. and 21 organisations were involved directly and indirectly in GI registration. Though Northeast region is rich in biodiversity, ethnicity and cultural diversity and has higher potential in registering many goods under GI such as agricultural crops, horticultural crops, spices, textiles, handicraft products, etc. However, the number of goods registered under GI is too low. There is an urgent need to increase the number of goods under GI registration by conducting more awareness programmes at the grassroot level in various sectors so that more potential GI products can be identified and registered accordingly. Out of 35 GI goods, only 9 products were registered in Part-B of GI for authorised users or producers which are too low at present. There is an urgent need to increase the number of registration under Part B of GI of authorised users or producers for all registered goods so that maximum benefits of GI registrations can be obtained by the users or producers in long run. There is a need to conduct awareness programme among the users or producers regarding the benefits of GI registration under Part B through sanctioning projects at the national level as it ensures protection of GI goods and also may improve the socio-economic conditions of the authorised producers sustainably.

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