

NEWS TODAY

Spices Board India (SBI) mandates Ethylene Oxide (ETO) testing for spice shipments to Singapore, Hong Kong

- Decision follows the **suspension of sales of certain spice blends** by Singapore and Hong Kong due to elevated levels of ETO.
 - ⊕ ETO is a **flammable, colorless gas at room temperature**.
 - ⊕ ETO serves as a disinfectant, fumigant, but its usage in food products is regulated **due to its cancer-causing nature**.
- **Spices Industry of India**
 - ⊕ India is the world's **largest producer, consumer and exporter of spices**.
 - ⊕ During 2022-23, **the export of spices** stood at US\$ 3.73 billion (major export destination were China, USA, and Bangladesh)
 - ⊕ India produces about **75 of the 109 varieties of spices** which are listed by the **International Organization for Standardization (ISO)**.
 - ◆ **Chilli, cumin, turmeric, ginger and coriander** makeup about 76% of the total production.
 - ⊕ **The largest spice-producing states** are Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, etc.
- **Challenges associated with the spices industry:** Low Productivity and Poor Product Quality, disappearance of some indigenous varieties, Rejection of Export due to pesticide residues beyond tolerable limits, etc.
- **Initiatives to promote exports**
 - ⊕ Guidelines on preventing **ETO contamination in Spices Exports** by SBI.
 - ⊕ **Export Development and Promotion of Spices.**
 - ⊕ **Setting up and maintenance of infrastructure for common processing (Spices Parks).**



About Spices Board India

- **Genesis:** Constituted in 1987 under the Spices Board act 1986.
- **Headquarter:** Cochin, Kerala.
- **Role:** Autonomous body responsible for the export promotion of the 52 scheduled species and development of Cardamom.
- India hosts and chairs **Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary herbs (CCSCH)** set up under Codex Alimentarius Committee.
 - ⊕ SBI serves as its secretariat.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

India to be among top 25 countries by 2030 in Logistics Performance Index ranking: Invest India


- **Invest India highlighted that**
 - ⊕ Indian logistics sector is **expected to reach USD 380 billion by 2025** from USD 250 billion in 2021.
 - ⊕ India aims to **reduce logistics cost from 13%- 14% of GDP to 8%- 10% of GDP by 2030**.
- Logistics includes **transportation and handling of goods between production and consumption points**, storage, value addition, and allied services.
 - ⊕ Logistics infrastructure comprises of ports, Multimodal Logistics Parks (MMLPs), warehouses etc.
- **Advantages of Efficient Logistics Sector**
 - ⊕ **Ensures smooth and efficient supply chain, minimizes delays and reduces lead time** (time taken to complete a supply chain process), crucial for business operations.
 - ⊕ **Fosters economic integration** by improving connectivity between regions and markets.
 - ⊕ **Enhance business** competitiveness due to reduction in transportation, storage and distribution costs.
 - ⊕ **Employment generation** in transportation, warehousing, distribution, and related services.
- **Challenges before Indian logistics sector**
 - ⊕ **Fragmented supply chain** with numerous small and independent players.
 - ⊕ **Complex regulatory framework**, bureaucratic procedures etc. hinders business operations
 - ⊕ **Lack of qualified personnel** proficient in supply chain management.
 - ⊕ **Delays in shipments and increased costs** due to lack of coordination between states.

Initiatives Taken to promote Logistics Sector


- **National Logistics Policy 2022** promotes **seamless flow of goods across the country and improves Indian goods competitiveness** in domestic and global markets.
- **MMLPs to improve the country's freight logistics sector** by enabling efficient inter-modal freight movement to lower overall freight costs and time etc.
- **Logistics Efficiency Enhancement Programme (LEEP)** to improve freight transport efficiency.
- **PM GatiShakti** to improve logistics efficiency.

The United states accuses Russia of employing the chemical agent chloropicrin in Ukraine

- **Chloropicrin** is a broad-spectrum fumigant chemical that can be used as an **antimicrobial, fungicide, herbicide, insecticide, nematocidal and also** as a warfare agent.
 - ⊕ First used as a **poison gas in the First World War, both by Allied and Central Powers.**
 - ⊕ **Features:** Colorless to yellow oily liquid.
 - ◆ Highly volatile and is a gas at room temperature.
 - ⊕ **Effects on humans:** Severe irritation to eyes, skin, respiratory tract, induce vomiting, etc.
- **Chemical weapons** are munitions and other devices which use the toxic effects of chemicals on living organisms to cause death or other harm.
- **International regulation on Chemical Weapons:**
 - ⊕ **Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)**, of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) entered into force in 1997.
 - ◆ **Prohibits the development, production, stock-piling and use of chemical weapons** and monitors its elimination in order to secure a chemical weapons free world.
 - ◆ **India is a signatory** and party of CWC and enacted Chemical Weapons Convention Act, 2000.
 - ⊕ **Geneva Protocol 1925:** Prohibits the use of chemical and biological weapons in the field of conflict.
- **Concerns regarding chemical weapons:** Indiscriminate nature, can cause lifelong damages, used in recent conflicts like in Syria, etc.



**Organization for the Prohibition
of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)**



Hague
(Netherlands)

- **Function:** Implementing body for the Chemical Weapons Convention.
- **Mission:** To implement the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention to achieve a vision of a world free of chemical weapons.
- **Members:** 193 (India is also its member).
- **Nobel Prize for peace:** Awarded in 2013 for 'its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons'.

CDSCO takes away state powers for issuing No Objection Certificate (NOC) for drug's exports from States

- Since 2018, export **NOC** and **manufacturing license** were granted by **State Licensing Authority** for manufacturing **unapproved/banned/new drugs** solely for export purposes.
- However, in recent notification **sole licensing authority** will be **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)**.
 - ⊕ All manufacturers are required to obtain **NOC from respective Zonal offices of CDSCO** through **SUGAM Portal**.
 - ⊕ The decision comes in view of Drug Consultative Committee's observation that process of **obtaining NOCs from state drug regulators** for pharmaceutical products is **time-consuming**, further **delaying export consignment**.
- **About Indian Pharmaceutical Industry (PI)**
 - ⊕ Widely recognised as 'Pharmacy of the World'.
 - ⊕ **Largest provider of generic medicines globally**, occupying a **20% share in global supply by volume**.
 - ⊕ **Contributes 70% of Diphtheria, Tetanus and Pertussis (DPT)** and **Bacillus Calmette-Guérin (BCG)** vaccines, and 90% of measles vaccines.
 - ⊕ It is expected to reach **USD 130 Billion by 2030**.
- **Challenges in Indian Pharmaceutical Industry**
 - ⊕ **Dependence on China** for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients.
 - ⊕ Instances of **contaminated drugs and cough syrups** manufactured in India.
 - ⊕ **Low investments** in Research & Development.
- **Initiatives taken to strengthen Pharma Industry**
 - ⊕ Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for Pharmaceuticals.
 - ⊕ Strengthening of Pharmaceutical Industry Scheme.
 - ⊕ Scheme for Promotion of Bulk Drug Parks.

About CDSCO

- **Ministry:** Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- **Headquarter:** New Delhi.
 - ⊕ It has 9 Zonal offices.
- **Performs its regulatory function under** Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940 and rules 1945.
- **It is responsible for**
 - ⊕ **Approval of Drugs, Conduct of Clinical Trials,**
 - ⊕ **Laying down standards** for Drugs,
 - ⊕ **Control over quality** of imported Drugs, etc.

National Green Tribunal (NGT) stated that Ganga River is facing floodplain encroachment

- In 2017, NGT declared an area of **100 metres** from edge of Ganga between Haridwar and Unnao as a “**No Development Zone**” to abate encroachment and pollution of river Ganga.
 - ⊕ Order directed state government to **demarcate floodplains and identify permissible and non-permissible activities.**
- **Floodplain zoning**
 - ⊕ It is recognized as an **effective non-structural measure for flood management.**
 - ⊕ It aims at **demarcating zones or areas likely to be affected by floods.**
 - ⊕ It specifies **permissible developments in demarcating zones** in order to minimize damage by flood.
- However, **many States have reservations on implementing floodplain zoning** due to high population density, non-availability of sufficient land for relocating people occupying floodplains, etc.
- **Steps for floodplain zoning**
 - ⊕ **Model Bill for Flood Plain Zoning 1975:** Envisages zoning of floodplain of a river according to flood frequencies.
 - ◆ Manipur, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir had enacted the legislation.
 - ⊕ **National Mission for Clean Ganga:** Advised all states in Ganga basin for **demarcation of river floodplains and removal of encroachment from floodplain** of river Ganga and its tributaries.

National Disaster Management Authority Guidelines related to Construction in Floodplains

- **Flooding once in 100 years:** Preferences should be given to Defence installations, public utilities like hospitals, electricity installations, water supply etc.
- **Flooding once in 25 years:** Public institutions, government offices, universities, residential areas etc. should be constructed on columns or stilts.
- **Flooding once in 10 years:** Reserved for green areas like parks, gardens.

IN-SPACE released Norms, Guidelines and Procedures (NGP) to implement Indian Space Policy (ISP) 2023

- ISP seeks to **institutionalize private sector participation in the space sector** with
 - ⊕ **The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)** will focus on research and development of advanced space technologies and
 - ⊕ **IN-SPACE** will focus on the development of space ecosystems in the country.
- NGP complements government endeavors in providing a **predictable regulatory regime, transparency and ease of doing business in the Indian space sector.**
- **Provisions for authorisation from IN-SPACE**
 - ⊕ **Jurisdiction: Any Entity carrying out Space Activities to or from Indian Territory** or within the jurisdiction of India including the area to the limit of its exclusive economic zone needs Authorization.
 - ⊕ **Only an Indian Entity can** apply for seeking Authorization.
 - ◆ **Non-Indian Entities** desiring to conduct Space Activity in India can apply for authorization through an Indian Entity.
 - ⊕ **Activities:** Any Space Activity, which shall include, inter-alia, launch, operation, guidance and/or re-entry of any Space Object shall need Authorization.
 - ⊕ **Process of registration:** makes it mandatory for operators to provide detailed information about their space objects for registration to India's national registry.

About Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center (IN-SPACE)

- **Genesis:** established in 2020.
- **About:** A single-window, independent, nodal agency that **functions as an autonomous agency in the Department of Space.**
- **Objective:** Space sector reforms to enable and facilitate the **participation of private players.**
- **Function:** responsible to promote, enable, authorize and supervise various space activities of non-governmental agencies.
 - ⊕ **Acts as an interface** between ISRO and Non-Governmental Entities (NGEs).

Also in News



Percolation wells

- An NGO has embarked on an ambitious project to build 10,000 percolation wells across Bengaluru by 2026.
- **About Percolating Wells**
 - ⊕ They are **earthen dams** padded with concrete rings inside and filled with gravel.
 - ⊕ **Mechanism:** Rain falls into percolation well, water leaks into soil in multiple layers and it goes down to the ground and **natural aquifers** get activated.
- An aquifer is a **body of rock and/or sediment** that holds groundwater.
 - ⊕ **Significance:** Improve groundwater levels and Prevents flooding.
- **Other Water Harvesting Structures**
 - ⊕ **Kund or Tanka** (Rajasthan);
 - ⊕ **Pat** (Madhya Pradesh);
 - ⊕ **Eri** (Tamilnadu), etc.



Chang'e-6

- Recently, China announced successfully launching of more than **8 metric ton Chang'e-6 lunar probe.**
- **About Chang'e-6**
 - ⊕ Aims to bring back **2 kilograms of samples from the far side of the moon**, which humans have never done before.
 - ◆ China brought samples from the near side of the moon in 2020 with the Chang'e-5 mission.
 - ⊕ It is expected to make a soft landing in the **South Pole of the moon i.e Aitken Basin.**
 - ⊕ It included the **ICUBE-Q orbiter**, a cubesat **developed by Pakistan.**
 - ◆ **CubeSats are miniature satellites** typically characterized by their small size and standardized design.



World Press Freedom Index (WPF) 2024

- ▶ India ranked **159 among 180 countries** in annual WPF 2024.
 - ⊕ It is released by **Paris based Reporters Without Borders (RSF)**, one of the world's leading NGOs in defense and promotion of freedom of information.
 - ⊕ It is published on **World Press Freedom Day (3 May)**.
 - ⊕ Theme: "A Press for the Planet: Journalism in the face of the Environmental Crisis".
- ▶ **About WPF 2024**
 - ⊕ Top 3 rankers are **Norway, Denmark and Sweden**.
 - ⊕ Based on 5 indicators- **Political, Economic, Legislative, Social and Security**.



Goods & Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)

- ▶ Centre has appointed retired Justice Sanjaya Kumar Mishra as President of GSTAT.
- ▶ **About GSTAT**
 - ⊕ It is a **Second Appellate Authority** established under **Central GST (CGST) Act, 2017** for hearing appeals against orders passed by Appellate Authority under CGST Act, 2017 and State GST Acts.
 - ⊕ It ensures **uniformity in redressal of disputes** arising under GST.
 - ⊕ It consists of a **Principal Bench (New Delhi)** and **various State Benches**.
 - ⊕ **Principal Bench** shall be presided over by President and shall consist of **two Technical Members** (one each from Centre and State).



Participatory notes (P-notes)

- ▶ Registered Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) domiciled at the GIFT International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) have been allowed to issue participatory notes (p-notes).
- ▶ **About P-notes:** They are issued by **registered foreign FPIs to overseas investors** to invest in the Indian **stock market** without **registering themselves directly**.
 - ⊕ P-Notes act like a **substitute** for underlying **Indian company shares**.
- ▶ **Benefits:**
 - ⊕ Avoids the **hassle of registering with SEBI** and offers **anonymity**.
 - ⊕ **More choices for investors** for investing in Indian stocks.
- ▶ **Challenge:** lack of transparency, uncontrolled money in Indian stock, etc.



Batillipes chandrayaani

- ▶ A new species of marine tardigrade discovered from the southeast coast of Tamil Nadu is named **Batillipes chandrayaani** after **Chandrayaan-3 moon mission**.
- ▶ **About Batillipes chandrayaani**
 - ⊕ **Third marine tardigrade species** to have been scientifically described from the Indian waters.
 - ⊕ It has a **trapezoid-shaped head and four pairs of legs** with **sharp-tipped sensory spines**.
- ▶ **About Tardigrade**
 - ⊕ They are **near-microscopic aquatic animals** with plump, segmented bodies and flattened heads.
 - ⊕ Also known as '**water bears**', they are among the **hardest animals**.
 - ⊕ **Marine Tardigrade** account for **17% of all known tardigrade species**.



Oxytocin

- ▶ Delhi High Court orders police action against **oxytocin use on cattle in city dairies**.
- ▶ **About Oxytocin**
 - ⊕ It is a hormone secreted by the **pituitary glands of mammals during sex, childbirth, lactation or social bonding**.
 - ⊕ It helps new mothers from **excessively bleeding after giving birth**.
 - ⊕ It is misused on **milch cattle to increase yield**.
 - ⊕ It is regulated under **Section 26 A of Drugs and Cosmetics Act of 1940**.
 - ⊕ Administering Oxytocin is considered **animal cruelty** and is punishable under **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960**.



Sri Madhava Perumal Temple

- ▶ **Inscriptions found at Sri Madhava Perumal Temple**, which has largely remained submerged by Bhavanisagar dam, **revealed a 1000 years old trade route**.
 - ⊕ The route connected the **Kongu region in western Tamil Nadu with southern Karnataka and Kerala** by crossing the River Bhavani and River Moyar.
- ▶ In 1338, **Veera Siddha Keththaya Dhandanayaka** constructed the Sri Madhava Perumal Temple.
- ▶ Temple is dedicated to **Thondreshwaramudiayar (Lord Shiva)**.
 - ⊕ The area came under the **Hoysala rulers**.

Places in News



Netherlands (Capital: Amsterdam)

- ▶ 12th India-Netherlands Foreign Office Consultations were held in The Hague, Netherlands.
- ▶ **Political features**
 - ⊕ Located in north-western Europe, also known as Holland.
 - ⊕ **Land Boundary:** Belgium (south) and Germany (east).
 - ⊕ **Water Bodies:** North Sea (north and west).
- ▶ **Geographical Features**
 - ⊕ **Major Rivers:** Rhine, Meuse etc.
 - ⊕ **Highest Point:** Vaalserberg.
 - ⊕ **More than a quarter** of the total land area of the Netherlands is **below sea level**.

