

Saffron Bowl project

February 5, 2022

In news— Recently, North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) under Saffron Bowl project has identified a few locations in Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya for saffron cultivation.

Key updates-

- In Arunachal Pradesh, there is a good growth of organic saffron with flowers.
- In Meghalaya, sample plantations were grown at Cherrapunji, Mawsmai and Lalingtop sites.
- The total cost of the whole project is Rs. 17.68 lakhs for Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya.
- Out of which, a tentative amount of Rs.6.00 lakhs has been earmarked for Barapani (Meghalaya) site.

About Saffron(Kesar)-

- Saffron is **a spice derived from the flower of Crocus sativus**, commonly known as the **“saffron crocus”**.
- The scientific name of wild saffron is Crocus cartwrightianus.
- The vivid crimson stigma and styles, called threads, are collected and dried for use mainly as a seasoning and colouring agent in food.
- It has long been the **world’s costliest spice by weight**.
- Its production has long been restricted to a limited geographical area in the Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir.
- It is believed that **saffron cultivation was introduced in Kashmir by Central Asian immigrants** around the 1st Century BCE.
- **Pampore region, in India, commonly known as Saffron bowl of Kashmir**, is the main contributor to saffron production, followed by Budgam, Srinagar, and Kishtiwari

districts.

- It has traditionally been associated with the famous Kashmiri cuisine and has medicinal values.
- **Pampore Saffron Heritage of Kashmir is one of the Globally Important Agricultural Heritage systems (GIAHS) recognised sites in India.**
- It grows well at an altitude of 2000 meters above sea level and needs a photoperiod (sunlight) of 12 hours.
- It thrives best in calcareous (soil that has calcium carbonate in abundance), humus-rich and well-drained soil with a pH between 6 and 8.
- It needs an explicit climatological summer and winter with temperatures ranging from no more than 35 or 40 degree Celsius in summer to about -15 or -20 degree Celsius in winter.
- It also requires adequate rainfall that is 1000-1500 mm per annum.
- **Iran is the world's leading producer of saffron,** followed by Spain and India.

North East Center For Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR)-

- It is an **autonomous body under the Department of Science & Technology**, Government of India supported a pilot project to explore the feasibility of growing saffron in North East region of India, with the same quality and higher quantity.
- Its **headquarters are in Shillong, Meghalaya.**
- It works towards the social and economic development of the Northeastern region by harnessing and leveraging frontier technologies available through the central scientific departments and institutions.