

1. State Institutions for Transformation



Topic: Governance

In News: Several states have approached the NITI Aayog, seeking its help to set up their own public policy institutions to boost development and drive inclusive growth.

More on the Topic

Need for Star Institution for Transformation:

- Health, education and infrastructure development are the responsibilities of state governments.
- There is a need for states to plan better to ensure meeting growing demand and ensure ease of doing business.
- SITs can **play a crucial role in bringing various stakeholders**, such as the private sector, and experts to address important state-specific issues. and work on strategies to carry out development work.
- Despite the replacement of Planning commission with NITI Aayog, **states so far have done little to rejuvenate their planning departments/boards.**
- Except for sectors like defence, railways and highways, the national GDP growth is an aggregation of states' rates of growth.

About NITI Ayog:

- The National Institution for Transforming India, also called NITI Aayog, was formed via a resolution of the Union Cabinet on January 1, 2015.
- NITI Aayog is the premier **policy 'Think Tank' of the Government of India**, providing both directional and policy inputs.

- While designing strategic and long term policies and programmes for the Government of India, NITI Aayog also provides relevant technical advice to the Centre and States.

NITI Aayog initiatives to build state's capacities:

- **'Development Support Services for States for Infrastructure Projects'** to achieve sustained delivery of infrastructure projects.
- **State Finances and Coordination Vertical** was formed for maintaining a State-wise database on macroeconomic, financial, and social indicators.
- **State Support Mission** will act as a multidisciplinary ecosystem to initiate cutting edge projects to catalyse development strategies of states, etc.

Source: Indian Express



Mohenjo Daro

2. Mohenjo-Daro

Topic: Culture

In News: 100 YEARS OF DISCOVERY OF MOHENJO-DARO has been completed recently..

More on the Topic:

- Mohenjo-daro meaning 'Mound of the Dead Men' is **an archaeological site in the province of Sindh, Pakistan.**
- Built around 2500 BCE, it was **the largest settlement of the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation**, and one of the world's earliest major cities, contemporaneous with the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Minoan Crete, and Norte Chico.
- With an estimated population of at least 40,000 people, Mohenjo-daro prospered until around 1700 BCE.

- **Mohenjo-daro was abandoned in the 19th century BCE** as the Indus Valley Civilization declined, and the site was not rediscovered until the 1920s.
- Significant excavation has since been conducted at the site of the city, which was **designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980**, the first site in South Asia to be so designated.
- The site is currently threatened by erosion and improper restoration.

Source: PIB

3. Electric vehicle (EV) battery technologies Suited for India



Topic: Science and Technology

In News: Non-profit Centre for Science and Environment has collaborated with the central government's Department of Science and Technology (DST) to create a platform for supporting the development of new electric vehicle (EV) batteries to suit Indian requirements.

More on the Topic:

Major Themes to be covered:

- **Build volumes for EV battery manufacturing and ensure supply chain** to further develop the pathways.
- **Assess the needs of Indian vehicles and the climatic stress** to develop pathways for battery management and thermal management systems.
- **Need appropriate cost-effective solutions** for small format two-wheelers.
- EV battery chemistries in India need to be application-specific.
- **Need innovation in Li ion batteries** that will dominate for a considerable time, especially in small vehicles.

- **Recycling of end of life batteries** will be important for material recovery though it will take time to mature.

About EV Batteries:

- An electric vehicle battery (EVB, also known as a traction battery) is a **rechargeable battery used to power the electric motors of a battery electric vehicle (BEV)** or hybrid electric vehicle (HEV).
- Typically lithium-ion batteries, **they are specifically designed for high electric charge (or energy) capacity.**
- While some EVs used **lead acid or nickel metal hydride batteries**, the standard for modern battery electric vehicles is now considered to be **lithium ion batteries.**

Source: Hindu

4. Asset Monetisation

Topic: Economy



In News: The Centre has asked ministries and departments to identify fresh assets that could be monetised expeditiously to bring back on track the monetisation process, which currently stands way short of the budget target for this fiscal year.

More on the Topic:

- Asset monetisation is the process of creating new sources of revenue for the government and its entities by **unlocking the economic value of unutilised or underutilised public assets.**
- A public asset can be any property owned by a public body, roads, airports, railways, stations, pipelines, mobile towers, transmission lines, etc., or even land that remains unutilised.
- As a concept, asset monetisation **implies offering public infrastructure to the institutional investors or private sector** through structured mechanisms.
- Monetisation is different from 'privatisation', in fact, **it signifies 'structured partnerships' with the private sector** under certain contractual frameworks.

Motives Behind Asset Monetisation:



- Asset monetisation has two important motives:
- Firstly, **it unlocks value from the public investment in infrastructure,**
- and secondly, **it utilises productivity in the private sector.**
- Asset monetisation aims **to tap the private sector investment for new infrastructure creation.**
- "Asset monetisation does not involve the selling of land, but it is about monetising brownfield assets".

Vijay Kelkar Committee on Asset Monetisation:

- In India, the idea of asset monetisation was first suggested by a committee led by economist **Vijay Kelkar in 2012 on the roadmap for fiscal consolidation.**
- The committee had recommended that **the government should start monetisation to raise resources for further development and financing infrastructure needs.**

National Monetisation Pipeline:

- The government of India announced the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) worth Rs 6 trillion in 2021.
- This scheme aims **to serve as a roadmap for the asset monetisation of several brownfield infrastructure assets** across sectors including roads, railways, aviation, power, oil and gas, and warehousing.
- NMP is **a central portal that could act as a land bank housing information** about all assets that have been lined up for utilisation by strategic investors or private sector companies. It will also assess the potential value of unused and underutilised government assets.
- **The NMP targets to raise Rs 6 trillion through asset monetisation of the central government, over a four-year period,** from FY22 to FY25.
- However, **the ownership of the assets will be retained by the Centre.** NMP focuses on brownfield assets in which investments have already been made but are underutilised.
- The underutilised brownfield assets are in sectors such as **roads, railways, airports, mines, and power.**
- This initiative is necessary for bringing in private capital which will be used for infra creation.

Source: Indian Express

5. Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act (PCAA) 1960



Topic: Governance

In News: A draft Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Amendment) Bill, 2022, prepared by the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying, has been opened for public comments.

More on the Topic:

- Essentially, **the law is proposed to be made tighter, with more stringent punishments.**
- Several offences have been made cognizable, which means offenders can be arrested without an arrest warrant.
- The draft Bill has proposed **to include “Bestiality” as a crime under the new category of “Gruesome cruelty.”**
- The proposed subsection describes “gruesome cruelty” as any act involving animals which leads to “extreme pain and suffering” and is “likely to leave the animal in life-long disability”.

Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act (PCAA) 1960:

- The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, authored by acclaimed dancer and animal lover, Rukmini Devi Arundale, is an Act of the Parliament of India enacted in 1960 to prevent the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals and to amend the laws relating to the prevention of cruelty to animals.
- PCAA, 1960 establishes Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) as **a statutory advisory body on animal welfare laws and promotes animal welfare.**

Source: Business Standard

6. MAARG Portal



Topic: e-Governance

In News: DPIIT has launched startup applications for registration on MAARG portal.

More on the Topic:

- MAARG portal is the National Mentorship Platform by Startup India.
- The purpose of the application is **to provide further boost the startup ecosystem by catalysing the startup culture** and building a strong and inclusive ecosystem for innovation and entrepreneurship in India.
- MAARG portal, **(Mentorship, Advisory, Assistance, Resilience and Growth)** is a **one stop platform to facilitate mentorship for startups** across diverse sectors, functions, stages, geographies, and backgrounds.
- The MAARG is being operationalized in three phases which include, **Mentor Onboarding, Startup Onboarding, and MAARG Portal Launch and Mentor Matchmaking.**

Source: Business Standard

7. Pangolins



Topic: Environment and Ecology

In News: CITES COP19 urges parties to remove references to pangolins from 'official pharmacopoeia.

More on the Topic:

- The pangolin is **'the most trafficked animal in the world'**.
- Pangolins are listed in **Appendix I of CITES** in accordance with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List.
- This means that **the species is threatened with extinction**.
- There are **eight species of pangolins in the world of which the Indian Pangolin (Manis crassicaudata) and the Chinese Pangolin (Manis pentadactyla) are found in India**.
- **IUCN Red List Status:** Indian pangolin (Endangered) & Chinese Pangolin (Critically Endangered).
- Threats include over usage in traditional medicine and apparels, meat for consumption

Source: Business Standard
