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1. NITI Aayog's India Innovation Index 2021 -Karnataka, Manipur and Chandigarh on Top (July 21, 2022)

NITI Aayog's India Innovation Index (third edition) released on 21 July by NITI Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery.

Important facts

- Karnataka has topped the India Innovation Index.
- Telangana and Haryana are second and third in the ranking, respectively.
- Karnataka has again topped the 'Major States' category.
- Manipur tops the category of 'Northeast and Hill States' followed by Uttarakhand and Meghalaya.
- Chandigarh tops the 'Union Territories' category, followed by Delhi.

Why is Karnataka on top in the ranking?

- Karnataka tops the list for attracting FDI and having a large number of venture capital deals.
- Karnataka is also the top 'performer' in terms of information and communication technology exports and Geographical Indication registration.

What is the India Innovation Index?

- The Index is released by NITI Aayog and the Institute for Competitiveness every year.
- It is a comprehensive tool for the evaluation and development of the country's innovation ecosystem.
- The first and second editions were launched in 2019 and 2021 respectively.
- Under this, the states and union territories are ranked on their innovation performance to create healthy competition among them.
- This time 66 indicators have been included as compared to 36 indicators used in the previous edition.

Significance of the Index

- The latest report is based on the framework of the Global Innovation Index (GII), which strengthens the scope of innovation analysis in the country.
- Innovation is at the forefront of India's 'Make in India' and 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives.
- By emphasizing on innovation, India can increase its manufacturing and develop its export competitiveness.

- It showcases the innovative capabilities of the states, highlights their strengths and weaknesses.

2. Indian Antarctic Bill 2022 listed for passing in Lok Sabha (July 21, 2022)

The Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022 has been listed for consideration and passed by the Lok Sabha.

About Indian Antarctic Bill 2022

- The Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on April 1, 2022.
- The bill seeks to give effect to the Antarctic Treaty, the Convention on the Protection of Antarctic Marine Living Resources and the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.
- It also seeks to protect the Antarctic environment and regulate activities in the region.

Need for legislation

- India has been a signatory to the Antarctic Treaty since 1983 and it obliged India to specify a set of laws to govern the parts of the continent where India had research stations.
- The treaty made it mandatory for 54 signatory countries to specify laws governing the areas on which their stations are located.
- The exploitation of marine living resources and human presence in Antarctica also requires such legislation to protect the Antarctic environment and ocean.

About Antarctica

- It is the southernmost continent and the fifth largest continent on Earth.
- Antarctica is uninhabited except for about 40 permanent stations set up by many countries including India for scientific research.
- India has two research centres on the Antarctic continent - 'Maitri' and 'Bharati'.
- India has completed 40 scientific expeditions here under the Antarctic program so far.

3. India And Namibia Sign MoU For Wildlife Conservation (July 20, 2022)

India and Namibia on 20 July signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Wildlife Conservation and Sustainable Biodiversity Use to place the Cheetah in the Historic Category in India.

Thrust areas of the MoU

- Biodiversity conservation with a special focus on the conservation and restoration of cheetahs in areas where they became extinct.

- Exchange of expertise and capabilities with the aim of promoting cheetah conservation between the two countries.
- Wildlife conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity by sharing good practices
- Technological applications, mechanisms of livelihood generation for local communities living in wildlife habitats and sustainable management of biodiversity.
- Cooperation in climate change, environmental governance, environmental impact assessment, pollution and waste management and other areas of mutual interest.
- Training and exchange of trained personnel in wildlife management including sharing of technical expertise, wherever relevant.

About Cheetah

- The cheetah is one of the oldest of the big cat species, whose ancestors can be traced back more than five million years to the Miocene era.
- It is the world's fastest land mammal that lives in Africa and Asia.
- Human-wildlife conflict, habitat loss and hunting and illegal trafficking are the reasons for their extinction in India.

Cheetah reintroduction project in India

- The main goal of the project is to establish viable cheetah metapopulation in India that allows the cheetah to perform its functional role as a top predator.
- The surveys were conducted at 10 locations between 2010 and 2012.
- Under this project, 50 cheetahs will be introduced in various national parks of the country over a period of 5 years.

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5. Cabinet approves MoU on Judicial Cooperation with Maldives (July 20, 2022)

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the field of judicial cooperation between India and the Judicial Service Commission of the Republic of Maldives.

Important facts

- It will provide a platform to tap the benefits of Information Technology for court digitization.
- It can be a potential growth area for the IT companies and start-ups in both the countries.
- With the signing of this agreement on cooperation in the field of law and justice, better relations between the two countries will gain further impetus.
- This will not only enable the exchange of knowledge and technology in judicial and other legal areas between the two countries but will also advance the objectives of the “Neighbourhood First” policy.
- In recent years, the close relations between India and Maldives have deepened multidimensionally.

About Maldives

- It is also called Maldives, an independent island country in the north-central Indian Ocean.
- It extends more than 510 miles (820 km) from north to south and 80 miles (130 km) from east to west.
- Basis of economy - fisheries, tourism
- Industries - handicraft or cottage including the making of coir (coconut-husk fibre) and coir products, fish canning, and boatbuilding.
- Capital - Male
- President - Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
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7. Govt formulates NAMASTE scheme for cleaning of sewers, septic tank (July 20, 2022)

Government has formulated a National Action Plan for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem- NAMASTE scheme for cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

What is the NAMASTE Scheme?

- The scheme is a joint venture of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- The Ministry has prepared a list of essential safety machinery and main equipment to be used by Safai Mitras.
- This step has been taken by the government to end the practice of manual scavenging in India.
- Manual scavenging is the practice of removing human feces by hand from a sewer or septic tank.

Aims of the scheme

- Achieving zero mortality in sanitation works in India.
- Preventing any sanitation worker from coming in direct contact with human faecal matter
- Ensuring all sewer and septic tank sanitation workers have access to alternative livelihoods

8. The 17th Indian Industry (CII) - Exim Bank Conclave on India-Africa growth partnership (July 20, 2022)

The 17th CII - Exim Bank Conclave on India-Africa growth partnership was held on 19th- 20th July 2022 in New Delhi.

Important facts

- Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal addressed the conclave.
- He called for the expansion, diversification and partnership of India-Africa economic ties to include emerging sectors such as solar energy, start-ups and digital infrastructure.
- India Exim Bank's study titled **“Building a Resilient Africa: Enhanced Role of India”** was presented during the conclave.

Four major focus areas for the India-Africa partnership

- Four major focus areas for the India-Africa partnership are-

1. Solar power
2. Military exchanges in the reference of the security of the Indian Ocean
3. Physical and digital infrastructure, health care, pharma and vaccines
4. Start-up ecosystem

India-Africa partnership

- Trade between India and African countries has been balanced with exports of around \$40 billion and imports of \$49 billion.
- Africa is India's fourth largest trading partner.
- Merchandise trade between both countries grew by 34 percent from USD 67 billion in 2019-20 to USD 89 billion in 2021-22.
- India has given 27 less-developed countries from Africa the benefit of duty free tariff preference.
- With both countries receiving significant amounts of sunlight, solar energy could be an area of engagement between Africa and India.
- Military exchanges in the Indian Ocean, defence trade, manufacturing in the defence sector can lead to greater engagement between Africa and India.
- India stands ready to help African countries in the areas of physical and digital infrastructure, be it information technology, setting up new infrastructure projects, helping with healthcare and manufacturing of vaccines.

About the Conclave

- It was launched in the year 2005 with the support of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India.
- The Conclave has been instrumental in encouraging Indian companies to establish and grow their footprints in Africa.

- The upcoming edition will focus on large scale trade and industry, exports, investments, exchange of knowledge and expertise between India and Africa.

9. 2, 877 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations sanctioned under Phase-2 of FAME India scheme (July 20, 2022)

The Ministry of Heavy Industries has approved 2,877 Electric Vehicle Charging Stations in 68 cities across 25 States/UTs under Phase II of FAME India.

Important facts

- In addition, 1576 charging stations have also been sanctioned on 9 expressways and 16 highways under the second phase of the FAME India scheme.
- Under Phase-I of FAME India Scheme, 479 charging stations have been installed as on 1 July, 2022.
- One thousand crore rupees have been allocated for the development of charging infrastructure for a period of five years with effect from April 1, 2019, under the second phase of the FAME-India scheme.

FAME India Scheme

- To improve the infrastructure required for the large-scale use of electric vehicles, the Government formulated a Scheme namely FAME India (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles) in 2015.
- Under this scheme, by the year 2022, 60-70 lakh hybrid and electric vehicles are targeted to be put on the roads across the country.
- This will reduce the consumption of about 950 crore litres of petrol and diesel, which will also save Rs 62 thousand crores spent on this.
- The main objective of this scheme is to reduce pollution and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Phase-II of FAME India Scheme is being implemented for a period of 3 years from April 1, 2019.
- The Phase-I of this Scheme was launched for a period of 2 years from 1st April 2015, which was extended from time to time and the last extension was allowed up to 31st March 2019.

Initiatives taken by the Government

- The Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs amended the Model Building Byelaws 2016 to establish charging stations and infrastructure in private and commercial buildings.
- The Ministry of Power has issued a notification regarding the infrastructure standard allowing private charging in residences and offices.
- From 11 June, 2021 the demand incentive under Phase II of FAME India Scheme has been increased.

- In addition, on June 25, 2021, the second phase of the FAME India scheme was extended for a period of 2 years till March 31, 2024.
- The government on 12 May 2021 approved the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for manufacturing of Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) in the country.
- Electric Vehicles are covered under Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for Automobile and Auto Components.
- GST on electric vehicles has been reduced from 12% upto 5%.

What are Electric Vehicles?

- Electric Vehicles are vehicles that are partially or fully powered on electric power.
- They have low running costs and are also very environmentally friendly as they use little or no fossil fuels (petrol or diesel).
- These vehicles can solve the problems of increasing pollution, global warming, depleting natural resources etc.

10. U.K. records its highest-ever temperature (July 20, 2022)

Britain broke its record for the highest temperature ever recorded, with a temperature of 39.1 °C (102.4 °F) on 19 July.

Important facts

- The United Kingdom had earlier recorded the highest temperature in 2019 at 38.7 C (101.7 F).
- This new record has been set in Charleswood, England.
- For the past week, the highest temperature has been recorded in the whole of Europe due to the scorching heat.
- "Extreme" heat warnings were issued for London in the south and Manchester and Leeds in the north on 19 July.
- The "extreme" warning means there is danger to human life.

Effects of Extreme Heat

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), extreme heat can exacerbate respiratory diseases, heart conditions and kidney diseases.
- Its immediate effects on the human body include dehydration and potentially fatal heat stroke.
- It can also have serious impacts on agriculture and forests.
- Due to this the plants wither and dry up and the disease spreads among the plants.

It causes forest fires which lead to reduction in forest cover and death of living beings.

Highest Temperature ever on Earth

- California's Death Valley registered a temperature of 54.4 degrees Celsius or 129.9 degrees Fahrenheit on August 16, 2020.
- Once verified, this could be the highest ever recorded temperature on Earth.
- Temperature is specified as preliminary, not final as it requires verification.
- Death Valley is a desert valley in Eastern California.