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Dholavira in Gujarat on UNESCO World Heritage list

The Harappan city of Dholavira, in present-day Gujarat, was named the 40th Indian site on UNESCO's World Heritage list. UNESCO's announcement came just days after another site, Ramappa Temple in Telangana, was admitted to the list.

Highlights:

1. The ancient city of Dholavira is one of the most remarkable and well-preserved urban settlements in South Asia dating from the 3rd to mid-2nd millennium BCE (Before Common Era).
2. Discovered in 1968, the site is set apart by its unique characteristics, such as its water management system, multi-layered defensive mechanisms, extensive use of stone in construction and special burial structures.
3. A range of artefacts of copper, shell, stone, jewellery, terracotta and ivory had been found at the site. The two newly inscribed World Heritage Sites offer great insight into the knowledge and ways of life of earlier societies, customs, and communities.
4. Located in the Kutch district, Dholavira is the larger of the two most remarkable excavations of the Indus Valley Civilisation dating back to about 4,500 years ago.

'Jabs for children as early as August'

Highlights:

1. Vaccination of children against COVID-19 may start as early as August, Union Health Minister told.
2. India was on its way to becoming the largest producer of vaccines as his Ministry would expedite more licences to Indian companies, he said. He also spoke about the government's efforts to fight COVID-19 and ramp up vaccination.



No landless farmers in the new database

The Centre's new National Farmers Database will only include land-owning farmers for now as it will be linked to digitised land records.

Highlights:

1. A data policy was being prepared specifically for the agriculture sector in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
2. This exclusion of landless and tenant farmers becomes significant in light of the fact that Government can make use of the database for targeted service delivery with higher efficiency and in a focussed and time-bound manner.
3. Opposition is raising concerns about data protection and farmer inclusion in the Centre's new Agristack initiative to create a digital ecosystem for agriculture.
4. The database would be linked to the digital land record management system and would thus only include farmers who were legal owners of agricultural land. In future, the possibility of including others may be considered in consultation with State governments and other stakeholders.

Panel raps govt. over MSMEs, urges larger economic package

A Parliamentary panel has pulled up the government for offering inadequate relief measures for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) that were worst-affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. It mooted fresh measures to help them stay afloat, including a doubling of the 90-day limit for banks to classify their loan dues as problematic.

Highlights:

1. Offering loans and long-term measures — as the government had done over the past year — instead of improving the cash flow to generate demand as immediate relief, have put small enterprises in a grim situation, the panel said in its report tabled in Parliament.
2. The second COVID-19 wave this year 'even more vigorously ripped the economy, particularly the MSME sector just as it was recovering from the initial lockdowns of 2020, the panel said.



3. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the Government should immediately come out with a larger economic package aimed at bolstering demand, investment, exports and employment generation to help the economy, including MSMEs to recover from the pandemic fallout.

IMF cuts emerging Asia, India growth forecasts

The International Monetary Fund cut this year's economic growth forecast for emerging Asia, including India, as a spike in coronavirus cases from new variants and slow vaccinations cloud the region's recovery prospects.

Highlights:

1. The downgrade, which contrasted with an upward revision in the IMF's forecast for advanced nations, highlights the divergence emerging across countries on the pace of recovery from the pandemic's hit.
2. In an update to its World Economic Outlook (WEO), the IMF forecast emerging Asia will grow 7.5% this year, down 1.1 percentage points from its projection.
3. That was a much bigger downgrade than a 0.4 point mark-down for emerging economies across the globe.