Development of Excavation Sites and Heritage Complexes (DESH) scheme

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Government policies and interventions*

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed developing archaeological sites in the Union Budget 2026.

- **Aim –** It is a ***heritage-based cultural tourism development scheme*** aimed at developing archaeological sites into vibrant experiential cultural destinations.
- **Nodal Ministry –** The Ministry of Culture.
- **Objective –** To place heritage at the centre of cultural tourism.
- To open excavated landscapes for ***public engagement and generate local employment***, and strengthen regional economies.
- To disperse tourism from over-crowded destinations to emerging heritage locations.
- **Proposed Sites –** Sites span from 3rd century BC to 19th century, across India.

Period	Site
Indus Valley / Ancient Civilisation	• Lothal (Gujarat) • Dholavira (Gujarat) • Rakhigarhi (Haryana) • Hastinapur (Uttar Pradesh) • Agroha (Haryana) • Eran (Madhya Pradesh – ancient mint site)
Buddhist / Early Historic	• Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh) • Sannati (Karnataka) • Udayagiri (Odisha)
Iron Age	• Adichanallur (Tamil Nadu – Iron Age urn burial site)

Medieval to Early Modern	• Jhansi Fort (Uttar Pradesh) • Chittorgarh Fort (Rajasthan) • Purana Qila (New Delhi) • Leh Palace (Ladakh) • Sibasagar – Ahom site (Assam)

References

IE | DESH scheme

