NITI Aayog's Report on Reforming S&T Councils

***Prelims**: Current Events of National and International importance*

Why in News?

Recently, Niti Aayog has proposed a roadmap to strengthen State Science and Technology (S&T).

- **Aim** - To decentralize scientific governance and boost region-specific innovation for economic growth.
- **Focus** - It is focusing on structural reforms, funding strategies, and stronger industry linkages to make these councils drivers of technological self-reliance and sustainable development.
- **Transforming Councils into Innovation Hubs** - State S&T Councils must evolve from passive bodies into dynamic enablers of regional innovation.
- **Funding Imbalances** - The report recommends performance-linked funding and encouraging councils to secure project grants and private sector support.
    - States like Kerala and Karnataka, have leveraged their councils to drive initiatives whereas other states remain hindered by irregular meetings, limited autonomy, and over-reliance on core grants from central agencies.
- **Leadership** - Niti Aayog suggests full-time executive directors with industry expertise and including industry bodies (CII, FICCI), scientists in council governance for better accountability and impact.
- **Boosting Industry Partnerships** – Strengthening Industry engagement ties is crucial for converting research into market-ready solutions and fostering local entrepreneurship.
- **Successful State Initiatives**
    - Punjab's anti-stubble burning briquetting plants,
    - Mizoram's grassroots innovation centre, and
    - Kerala's fellowship for women scientists returning to research.
- **Towards a Knowledge Economy** - State S&T Councils are vital for addressing local challenges in agriculture, renewable energy, disaster management, and healthcare.
    - Empowering them is key to building a resilient, innovation-driven India ready to compete globally.
- **Need for Reform** - India faces rising global competition in innovation and seeks to improve its R&D rankings.
    - Empowering state institutions is seen as essential for bridging gaps in the decentralised R&D landscape and achieving technological ambitions.

Reference

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