100 years of Discovery of Harappan Civilisation

Why in News?

September 20, 2024, marks the 100th anniversary of the announcement regarding the discovery of the Harappan Civilisation.

What is Harappan Civilisation?

- **Civilization** - It is a ***bronze age society*** that existed along the river Indus, thus rreferred to as the Indus Valley civilization (IVC).
- It is also called Harappan civilization, named after *Harappa*which was the *first site unearthed* in the region.

Three Phases of IVC

Early Phase (3200 BCE to 2600 BCE)	Mature Phase (2600 BCE to 1900 BCE)	Later Phase (1900 BCE to 1500 BCE)
• It was mainly rural. • Here, the population shifted from the uplands of Baluchistan to the floodplains of the Indus Valley.	• It is marked by more human settlements & Town planning.	• It was a time of gradual decline for the civilization. • It saw the breakdown of urban centers and the establishment of rural networks.

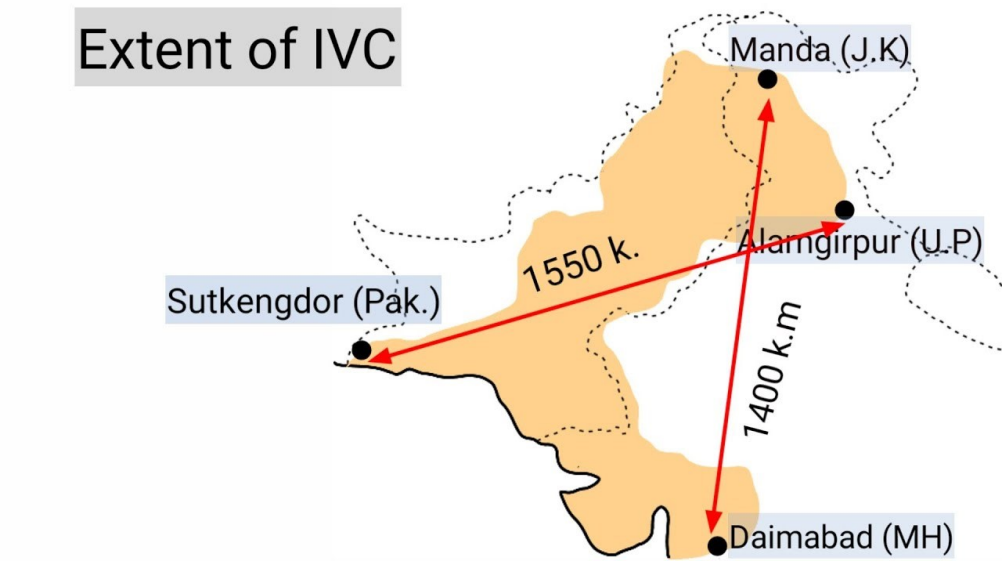
Harappa is an IVC site in located in present-day Pakistan.

- **Discovery** – In 1921, John Marshall who was then the Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India authorized an Article called "**New Discoveries of an Unknown Prehistoric Past"**.
- He termed his discovery as "civilization of the Indus Valley."
- This civilization thrived near the Indus and Saraswati rivers.

Daya Ram Sahni (Year 1921)	Rakhal Das Banerji (1922)
• **Excavated** - Harappa Site. • **Discovered** - Uncovering seals, painted pottery, and beads. Described as "industrious, precise, and humble,	• **Excavated** - Mohenjo-daro • **Discovered** - Seals, pottery, copper artifacts, and crucibles

What are its geographical extension?

- **Geographical area** – It spans about 1.5 million sq.km.
- **Coverage** – It is spread across *North West India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan*.



Boundaries	Extension
Western boundary	• It reaches up to the coastline of South Baluchistan at Suktagendor.
Eastern boundary	• Extents up to Alamagirpur in Uttar Pradesh (District Meerut).
Northern Boundary	• It stretched to Manda in Jammu & Kashmir
South Boundary	• Earlier, it reached Bhagvatrav in the Narmada Estuary of Gujarat. • The discovery at Diamabad, Maharashtra) revealed four Bronze figurines along the Pravara River, indicating further southern expansion of the civilization.

- **Extension In India** –
  - **Gujarat** – Lothal and Dholavira
  - **Haryana** – Rakhigarhi
  - **Jammu and Kashmir** - Manda
  - **Maharashtra** - Daimabad
  - **Rajasthan** - Kalibangan
  - **Uttar Pradesh** - Alamgirpur
- The *Southernmost extension is Daimabad* on Godavari river basin in Maharashtra.
- **Total sites** – *Around 2,000* within this civilization's expanse.
  - **Five largest sites** – Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Ganweriwala (all in Pakistan), Rakhigarhi, and Dholavira (both in India).
- **Heart of the civilization** - It was *located in Sind and Punjab* in unpartitioned India, from which it radiated in all directions.

What are its features?

- **Economy –** They engaged in agriculture, animal husbandry, and also involved in trade.
- **Society –** It was matriarchal in nature as a large number of terracotta female figurines have been found from various sites.
- It represent the worship of the *Great Mother Goddess*.

- **Religion** – They worshipped animals, human figure and trees.
- **Craft** – Development of epigraphy, ceramics, pottery, bead making and *bronze & copper* crafts
- Detailed *lapidary craftsmanship*, particularly in micro-drilling long carnelian beads with chemically stained designs were observed.
- **Seals** - Intricately carved stamp seals made of *steatite*, engraved with life like human and animal motifs along with text or icons were found.

Remarkable similarities was observed between the artifacts from Harappa and Mohenjo-daro, despite their 640 km separation.

- **Town Planning** – At its Peak, it was a "technological powerhouse," known for town planning, water management, construction of reservoirs, stadiums, underground drainage systems, fortification walls & boat building.
- **Standardized measures –** It includes cubic weights crafted from *polished chert* using binary and decimal systems.
- Widespread use of *standardized burnt bricks with a 1:2:4 ratio* for bonding.
- **Science & Technology** – They had specialized metallurgists, hydrologists, mathematicians & astronomers.

How IVC discovery bridges historical gaps in India?

- **Settled life in India** – Historians previously believed that settled life in the region began only around the sixth century BCE, creating a historical void in South Asia.
- **Historical gap** – India transitioned abruptly from the Stone Age to the era of Buddhist stupas.
- **Continuity of settled life -** Discovery of the *Harappan civilisation filled this gap* and significantly *extended the timeline of settled life in* the region by over 3,000 years.
- It introduced another ancient civilization in Asia, alongside those in Egypt and Mesopotamia.
- **Trade links** – It *unveiled the Harappan civilization's maritime links* with West Asia dating back to 3000 BCE alongside those in Egypt and Mesopotamia

Reference

The Hindu| 100 years of Discovery of IVC

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