Discovery of an 1,500 Year Old Reservoir in Elephanta Island

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Art & Culture | History*

Why in News?

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has unearthed a 1,500-year-old stepped reservoir on Elephanta Island, off the Mumbai coast.

Elephanta Island

- **Located in –** Mumbai Harbour, Maharashtra.
- It is also known as ***Gharapuri ("City of Caves").***
- **UNESCO Heritage Site – Elephanta Caves** (5th century) are located on Elephanta Island.
- It features massive rock-cut sculptures dedicated to *Lord Shiva* is designated as UNESCO World Heritage site.
- **Historic Ports** – Originally comprised 3 key maritime localities
  - Morabandar,
  - Rajbandar, and
  - Shethbandar.
- **Global Trade** – It served as an ancient hub linking ***India to Rome and Mesopotamia*** as early as the 2nd century CE.



Key Findings of the recent discovery

- **Stepped Reservoir –** Reveal an advanced water management system essential for its role in maritime commerce.
  - **Estimated age** – 1,500 years.
  - **Dimensions –** 14.7 m long, 6.7 m & 10.8 m wide, T-shaped.
  - **Built -** Stone blocks ferried from the mainland.
  - **Depth excavated** – 5 m, exposing 20 steps.
  - **Purpose –** Water storage on rocky terrain with poor soil absorption.
- **Other Excavated Artifacts –**
  - Brick structure (possibly a *dyeing vat* for textiles).
  - Storage pot, terracotta figurines, glass & stone bangles.
  - Beads of *carnelian and quartz.*
  - *Stone anchors* indicating maritime activity.
  - 3*,000 amphorae sherds* (Roman-style jars) and *torpedo jars* from West Asia (Mesopotamia) – used for wine, oil, fish sauce.
  - **60 silver, lead, and copper coins** belonging to Krishnaraja (Kalachuri Dynasty).
- **Coins of Krishnaraja – Kalachuri Dynasty (6th CE)**
  - **Features -** *Obverse* **–** Seated bull motif and *Reverse* **–** Temple symbol with legend “Sri Krishnaraja.”
  - Confirms *Kalachuri presence and influence in western India* during this period.

Reference

[The Hindu | Elephanta Islands]