Early Harappan settlement in Gujarat

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Why in News?

Archaeologists from the University of Kerala have unearthed a 5,300-year-old settlement near Lakhapar village in western Kachchh, Gujarat.

- The excavation has revealed an Early Harappan habitation site, located near the now-quiet ***Gandi River***, once a perennial water source.
- It provides critical habitation context to those burials, suggesting a dynamic, interconnected cultural landscape in the arid Kachchh desert.
- **Architecture** - The excavation uncovered structural remnants, walls made of local sandstone and shale, indicating well-planned construction activities.
- **Pottery** - It has the presence of pottery from both Early and Classical Harappan phases, dating back to around 3300 BC.
- Among these finds is the extremely rare Pre-Prabhas Ware, previously known from only 3 sites across Gujarat.

Pre-Prabhas Ware refers to a distinct ceramic tradition found in Gujarat during the Early Harappan period, characterized by Fine Red Ware, Coarse Gray or Red Ware, Fine Gray Ware, and Black and Red Ware.

- The presence of this distinct ceramic tradition at Lakhapar points to a culturally unique group within the larger Harappan civilization.
- **Burial site –** They discovered a human burial in the vicinity of the settlement.
- The skeleton, though poorly preserved, was interred directly in a pit with no visible architecture or markers and ***accompanied by Pre-Prabhas Ware pottery.***
- This is the 1st known burial to include this rare ware, hinting at a previously undocumented ritual practice or subgroup within the Early Harappan population.
- **Discovered Artefacts** - Semiprecious stone beads made of carnelian, agate, amazonite, and steatite; shell ornaments, copper and terracotta objects and lithic tools.
- Of particular note are Rohri chert blades, which indicate connections with the Sindh region.
- **Animal remains -** Cattle, sheep, goats, fish bones, and edible shell fragments, suggest that inhabitants relied on both animal husbandry and aquatic resources.
- Samples have also been collected for archaeobotanical analysis to understand plant use and ancient diet.
- Lakhapar bridges that critical gap, offering a rare glimpse into both the living and the dead of the same cultural group.

Reference

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