India’s Largest Circular Stone Labyrinth

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance*

Why in News?

In India, archaeologists have made a discovery that will help historians better understand the country’s ancient trade networks, confirming the presence of a large circular stone labyrinth.

- The recent findings described the uncovering of a massive structure measuring roughly 50 feet by 50 feet.
- **Period** - This structure dating back nearly 2,000 years in the Boramani grasslands of ***Solapur district in Maharashtra.***
- The structure is composed of *15 concentric stone circuits*, the highest number ever documented in an Indian circular labyrinth.
- Previous discoveries have topped out at 11 circuits.
- **Related Dynasty -** Archaeologists have linked the structure to the ***Satavahana dynasty***, which ruled large parts of the Deccan Plateau between the 1st and 3rd centuries CE.
- During this period, Maharashtra played a central role in long-distance trade between India and the Roman world,serving as a conduit between inland settlements and ports.
- **Design -** The researchers believe the labyrinth’s design offers compelling evidence of Indo-Roman contact.
- The circular pattern closely resembles labyrinth motifs found on ancient *coins from Crete.*
- Such coins were widely used as ***Roman currency*** and have been discovered in Indian port cities and trading centers dating to the same era.
- **Purpose -** Experts have proposed that these labyrinths may have served as navigational markers or symbolic signposts for Roman merchants and local traders moving goods such as spices, textiles, and precious stones.
- Similar, though smaller, stone labyrinths have been identified in neighboring districts, including Sangli, Satara, and Kolhapur.

- Together, these finds suggest the existence of a broader network of structures spanning western Maharashtra, possibly marking inland trade routes that once connected coastal ports to the Deccan interior.
- **Significance** - Their placement in open grasslands rather than within settlements, religious complexes, or fortifications has fueled speculation that they were meant to be seen from a distance, guiding travelers across unfamiliar terrain.

Reference

Jpost | Large circular stone labyrinth

