Qin Straight Road

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Why in News?

Archaeologists in China have uncovered a 2,200-year-old section of the Qin Straight Road, a massive highway built under Emperor Qin Shi Huang (the first emperor of China).

- **Location –** It is found in ***Shaanxi province, northwestern China***.
- **Newly uncovered stretch –** The 13-kilometre (8-mile) stretch is part of a much larger 900 km road network built during the Qin dynasty, which connected the heartland and frontier of China's first empire.
- **Construction –** Initiated by Qin Shi Huang, China's first emperor, in 212 BC, and completed in 207 BC under his successor, Qin Er Shi.

  *The construction of the **Great Wall** was also begun under Qin Shi Huang.*

- **Purpose of the road –**
  - To establish a direct north-south route from Xianyang, the capital of the Qin dynasty in modern-day Shaanxi, to Jiuyuan, which is now Baotou in Inner Mongolia.
  - To enable the quick movement of troops and supplies to combat the Xiongnu nomads.
  - To strengthen the imperial control over frontier regions.
- **Size –** The road was about 40 metres (130 feet) wide, similar to a modern four-lane traffic road, and in some areas stretched up to 60 metres.
- **Engineering Techniques -**
  - Straight trench passes cut through terrain.
  - Rammed earth slopes reinforced for durability.
  - Compacted roadbeds and valleys for stability
  - Valleys are deliberately filled to maintain a level route.
- **Significance –** The Qin Straight Road is the 2nd largest national defence project in ancient China, following the Great Wall, and reflects the Qin dynasty's ambition to unify and control China through infrastructure.

Quick Fact

Qin Dynasty

• The Qin Dynasty (221–206 BCE) was China's first imperial dynasty, though a short-lived one, laid the foundation for imperial China.
• **Founded by** – Qin Shi Huang, who unified China after the Warring States Period.
• **Measures Undertaken** – Established a centralised system of administration, standardising writing, currency, and weights, and divided the empire into commanderies under appointed officials.
• **Infrastructure** – Initiated major projects like the Great Wall and famous Terracotta Army in his tomb, extensive road and canal networks.
• Collapse – After the death of Qin Shi Huang in 210 BCE, the empire started to collapse, and fell in 207 BCE, replaced by the Han dynasty.

References

1. Indian Express | Archaeologists uncover 2,200-year-old highway in China
2. Britannica | Qin Dynasty

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