Sirpur archaeological site

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance*

Why in News?

Sirpur is set for a facelift as Chhattisgarh pushes for a UNESCO World Heritage tag

- Sirpur, also known as Shripur and Sripura, is a ***multi-religious urban centre*** first discovered in 1882 by Alexander Cunningham.

  Alexander Cunningham is a British army engineer who became the first Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1871.

- Sirpur in is a 5^{th}–12^{th} Century archaeological site on the banks of the ***Mahanadi.***
- Excavations revealed 22 Shiva temples, 5 Vishnu temples, 10 Buddhist viharas and 3 Jain viharas.
- Sirpur was the flourishing capital of Dakshina Kosala under the Panduvanshi and later Somavamshi kings. The site still has ruins of palace complexes, market structures, residential quarters, brick and stone temples, viharas, stupas, meditation cells and a water management system.
- The Lakshmana Temple (dedicated to Vishnu), one of India's finest brick temples, was built around the 7th Century.
- The Surang Tila complex built on a high terrace accessed by a steep flight of 37 steps has multiple shrines in the **panchayatana style** (one main shrine surrounded by four subsidiary ones).
- The site was a major Buddhist centre with large viharas, meditation halls, and excavated stupas.
- One monastery (Tivaradeva Mahavihara) houses a significant Buddha statue.
- Archaeologists have also uncovered a 6th-century market complex,

showing Sirpur was both a religious and commercial hub.

- Sirpur’s location along the Mahanadi creates a sacred riverine cultural landscape with ghats and temple clusters, aligning with UNESCO’s concept of a combined work of nature and humankind, enhancing the site’s value.

Reference

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