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Rakhigarhi



- The recent excavations of the Rakhigarhi site of the Harappan Civilization by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) have unearthed the structure of some houses, streets and drainage system.
- Thousands of pottery and seals have also been found in the excavation of ASI, besides copper and gold ornaments, terracotta toys.
- The purpose of this excavation is to locate the structural remains of Rakhigarhi and preserve them for future and make the archaeological site of Rakhigarhi accessible to tourists.
- Apart from this, DNA samples of two human skeletons found in the excavation have been collected and sent for scientific examination, on the basis of the test report of these DNA samples, about the genealogy and food habits of the people living in Rakhigarhi area thousands of years ago can be detected in.

Rakhigarhi:

- Rakhigarhi is the largest Harappan site in the Indian subcontinent.

- Other major sites of the Indus Valley Civilization (Harappan Civilization) in the Indian subcontinent are Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Ganveriwala in Pakistan and Dholavira (Gujarat) in India.
- Rakhigarhi is being excavated to trace the beginning of this civilization and to study its gradual development from 6000 BC (Pre-Harappan phase) to 2500 BC.
- The excavation work of this site was done under the leadership of Amarendra Nath of ASI.
- Rakhigarhi is one of the five iconic sites announced by the Union Finance Minister during the budget speech in the year 2020.
- Other such sites are Hastinapur in Uttar Pradesh, Sivasagar in Assam, Dholavira in Gujarat and Adichanallur in Tamil Nadu.

Key findings of the site:

COLONY:

- Archaeological excavations show that the mature Harappan phase was represented by a planned city system with mud-brick as well as baked-brick houses with proper drainage.

Seals and pots:

- A cylindrical seal, with five Harappan character figures on one side and a gharial on the other, is an important discovery from this site.
- The ceramic industry was represented by red pottery, which included simple saucers, vases, perforated jars.

Rituals and Cremations:

- Archaeological excavations have also yielded evidence of mud-brick on the earthen floor and triangular and circular fire-altars with pits dug for animal sacrifice, indicating the ritual system of the Harappans.
- The excavation has also yielded some tombs, which certainly belong to a later phase, probably the medieval period.
- The excavation found two female skeletons buried with pottery and ornaments such as jasper, agate beads and shell bangles.

Other archaeological remains:

- Blades, terracotta and shell bangles, semi-precious stone beads, copper objects, animal figurines, toy cart frame and terracotta wheel, engraved steatite seal and ceiling.

Study of DNA samples:

- In a study done on DNA (DeoxyriboNucleic Acid) of skeletons excavated from the graveyard of Harappan site 'Rakhigarhi' in Haryana, it was found that the people of Indus Valley Civilization have an independent lineage.
- This study rejects the earlier hypothesis that the lineage of the Harappans was related to the steppe pastoralists or ancient Iranian farmers.

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Asian Election Authority



- India has been unanimously elected as the new President of the Association of Asian Election Authorities (AAEA) for the year 2022-2024 in the recently held meeting of the Executive Board and General Assembly in Manila, Philippines.
- The newly added members to the Executive Board include Russia, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Taiwan and the Philippines.

AAEA:

- It was established in pursuance of a resolution passed by the participants of the Symposium on Asian Elections in the 21st Century, held in Manila, Philippines in the year 1998 from 26-29 January 1997.
- There are currently 20 members of the AAEA, the Asian election monitoring body.
- The Election Commission of India is the founder and member of the 'Election Monitoring Body' of AAEA and also served as Vice President on the Executive Board of AAEA during 2011-13 and President during 2014-16.
- The AAEA is also an associate member of the 118-member Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB).

Objective of AAEA:

- To provide a non-partisan forum in the Asian region for sharing of experience and best practices among election officials.
- To discuss and act on ways to promote open and transparent elections with a view to supporting good governance and democracy.

India's role in AAEA:

- India has regularly organized several international training programs for member countries at the International Institute for Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM).
- Since 2019, IIIDEM has been instrumental in training over 250 officers from AAEA member countries.
- ECI has also organized International Election Visitors Program (IEVP) for member countries and International Virtual Election Visitors Program (IEVP), which was organized during the assembly elections in the year 2022.

Election Commission of India:

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is a constitutional body envisaged to uphold the values of equality, fairness, freedom enshrined in the Constitution of India and the rule of law under superintendence, direction and control over electoral governance.
- Part XV of the Indian Constitution deals with elections and provides for the establishment of the ECI.
- Articles 324 to 329 of the Constitution deal with the powers, functions, tenure, eligibility etc. of the Commission and its members.
- The members of the ECI are appointed by the President of India on the basis of the recommendations of the Prime Minister.
- However, Article 324(2) provides that Parliament is empowered to make laws regarding the appointment of Election Commissioners (ECs).

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