



## Mohenjo Daro: UNESCO's World Heritage Site

**For Prelims:** Indus Valley Civilization, Significance of World Heritage, Flood in Pakistan.

**For Mains:** Mohenjo Daro, UNESCO's World Heritage Site.

### Why in News?

Pakistan's Department of Archaeology warned that [heavy rainfall in the Sindh](#) province threatened the [World Heritage status of Mohenjo Daro](#).

### What threatens the Heritage Site?

- Between August 16 and 26, 2022, the **archaeological ruins of Mohenjo Daro received a record 779.5 mm of rain**, which had resulted in "considerable damage to the site and partial falling of several walls, including the protection wall of the stupa dome".
  - Muneeer Area, Stupa, Great Bath and other important sites of these ruins have been badly affected by the natural disaster.
- It is feared that the ruins of Mohenjo Daro might be removed from the World Heritage list, therefore the authorities of Sindh have called for **urgent attention towards conservation and restoration work at the site**.

### What are the Key Points of Mohenjo Daro?

- The site of Mohenjo Daro, literally meaning 'Mound of the Dead' is one of the important sites of [Indus Valley Civilization \(IVC\)](#).
  - Sites of the **Indus Valley Civilisation** have been found in a **large area extending from Sutkagen Dor in Balochistan near the Pakistan-Iran border to Alamgirpur in Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh**, and from Manda in Jammu to Daimabad in Maharashtra.
  - Other important sites of the Harappan civilization in India are at [Lothal](#) and [Dholavira](#) in **Gujarat, and Kalibangan in Rajasthan**.
- Along with Harappa, Mohenjo Daro is the **best-known site of the bronze age (3300 BC to 1200 BC) urban civilization**.
- It flourished in the Indus Valley between roughly **3,300 BC and 1,300 BC**, with its '**mature' phase spanning the period 2,600 BC to 1,900 BC**.
- Civilization went into decline in the middle of the second millennium BC for reasons that are believed to include **catastrophic climate change**.
- Excavation of Mohenjo Daro was started in 1920 and continued in phases until 1964-65, even now **only a small part of the site has been excavated**.
  - The prehistoric antiquity of Mohenjo Daro was established by **Rakhal Das Banerji of the Archaeological Survey of India in 1922**.
- The site is **famous for its elaborate town planning with street grids** with brick pavements, developed water supply, drainage, and covered sewerage systems, homes with toilets, and monumental buildings such as the **Great Granary and the Great Bath**.

- At its peak, it was estimated to have between 30,000 and 60,000 residents with a **highly evolved social organization**.
- The ruins of the sprawling city of unbaked brick 510 km northeast of Karachi and 28 km from Larkana in Sindh were recognised as a **UNESCO World Heritage site in 1980**.

## What are UNESCO's World Heritage Sites?

- **About:**
  - A **World Heritage Site** is a place that is listed by **UNESCO for its special** cultural or physical significance.
  - The list of World Heritage Sites is **maintained by the international 'World Heritage Programme'**, administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.
  - This is embodied in an international treaty called the **Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage**, adopted by UNESCO in 1972.
- **Sites:**
  - There are around **1,100 UNESCO listed sites across its 167 member countries**.
  - **In 2021**, 'Liverpool — Maritime Mercantile City' in the United Kingdom was deleted from the World Heritage List due to "the **irreversible loss of attributes** conveying the outstanding universal value of the property".
    - In 2007, the UNESCO panel **delisted the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Oman** after concerns over poaching and habitat degradation, and the Elbe Valley in Dresden, Germany, in 2009 after the construction of the Waldschloesschen road bridge across the Elbe River.
- **Sites in India:**
  - India is home to a total of **3691 monuments and sites**. Of these 40 are designated as **UNESCO World Heritage Sites**.
  - Including places like the Taj Mahal, **Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves**. **World Heritage Sites also include natural sites like the Kaziranga National Park in Assam**.
    - Harappan city of **Dholavira** in Gujarat as India's **40<sup>th</sup> world heritage site**.
    - **Ramappa Temple (Telangana)** was India's 39<sup>th</sup> World Heritage Site.
    - **Khangchendzonga National Park**, Sikkim has been inscribed as India's first and the only "Mixed World Heritage Site".
  - In 2022, the Union Ministry of Culture nominated **Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysalas temples** for consideration as a World Heritage site for the year 2022-2023.

## What is UNESCO?

- **About:**
  - It was founded in 1945 to develop the "intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" as a means of building lasting peace. It is located in Paris, France.
- **Major Initiatives of UNESCO:**
  - **Man and Biosphere Programme**
  - **World Heritage Programme**
  - **Global Geopark Network**
  - **Network of Creative Cities**
  - **Atlas of World Languages in Danger**

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

### Prelims

**Q. Which of the following characterizes/characterize the people of Indus Civilization? (2013)**

1. They possessed great palaces and temples.
2. They worshipped both male and female deities.

3. They employed horse-drawn chariots in warfare.

**Select the correct statement/statements using the codes given below:**

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) None of the statements given above is correct

**Ans: (b)**

**Exp:**

- Excavations at Indus Valley sites confirmed that the inhabitants of the Indus Valley Civilization did not build large monumental structures. **There is no conclusive evidence of palaces or temples**—or even of kings, armies, or priests. The largest structures found are granaries. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- The city of Mohenjo-daro contains **the Great Bath**, which may have been a large, public bathing and social area.
- The clay seals discovered during various excavations reveal the presence of a male God. The seal with a male God wearing a headdress surrounded by various animals exhorts the belief in the male symbol of strength. The figurine of a female God found in the excavation also suggests their beliefs on the female as a source of creation. **Hence, statement 2 is correct.**
- There is **no evidence of horse drawn chariots** during the Indus Valley Civilization. **Hence, statement 3 is not correct.**
- **Therefore, option (b) is the correct answer.**

### **Mains**

**Q.** To what extent has the urban planning and the culture of the Indus Valley Civilization provided inputs to the present day urbanization? Discuss. **(2014)**

**Q.** Safeguarding the Indian art heritage is the need of the moment. Discuss. **(2018)**

**Source: IE**

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