

## Excavation of Mauryan Empire in Patna | Bihar | 12 Dec 2024

## Why in News?

Recently, the <u>Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)</u> initiated the excavation of the '80-pillared assembly hall' at Kumhrar, a site regarded as the only surviving evidence of the <u>architectural</u> achievements of the <u>Mauryan emperors</u> in the Indian subcontinent.

## **Key Points**

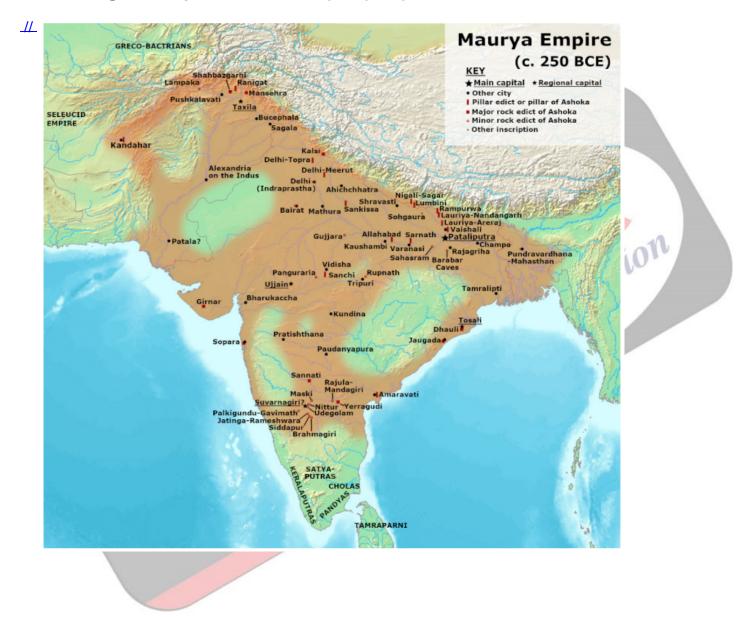
- Uncovering the Mauryan Palace at Kumhrar:
  - According to ASI, the excavation began on 1st December 2024 at the Kumhrar protected site in Patna, focusing on the Asokan Sabha Ghar (assembly hall).
  - The primary aim is to assess the current condition of the buried Mauryan stone pillars.
  - A detailed scientific analysis will be conducted, including collaboration with the <u>Central</u>
    <u>Ground Water Board</u> to measure the water table.
  - Based on the findings, the possibility of uncovering all 80 pillars will be considered.
- Historical Context and Past Excavations:
  - The Mauryan period hall, believed to have been used by <u>Emperor Ashoka</u> for the <u>Third</u> <u>Buddhist Council</u> in the 3rd century BCE, was first revealed through excavations between 1912-1915 and 1951-1955.
- Challenges:
  - In the late 1990s, the ruins suffered from <u>waterlogging</u> due to groundwater seepage, causing damage to the structure.
    - To prevent further deterioration, the **site was covered with soil and sand in 2004.**
  - Initially, a few pillars will be uncovered for condition assessment. If the condition permits, more pillars may be revealed to the public.
- Importance of Kumhrar:
  - Kumhrar, located in Patna, houses remnants of the ancient city of Pataliputra, the Mauryan Empire's capital.
  - Archaeological discoveries at Kumhrar, dating to 600 BCE, provide insights into the history of rulers like Ajatasattu, Chandragupta Maurya, and Ashoka.
  - The site includes artifacts spanning four historical periods, from 600 BCE to 600 CE, highlighting its historical significance.

## **Mauryan Dynasty**

- Chandragupta Maurya (321-297 BCE): The founder of the Mauryan Empire, overthrew the Nanda dynasty and expanded the empire by annexing regions such as the <u>Hindu Kush</u>.
  - In 305–303 BCE, he formed a treaty with Seleucus Nicator, gaining additional territories.
    Later in life, Chandragupta became a disciple of <u>Jainism</u>.
  - <u>Chanakya</u>, the prime minister under the reign of Chandragupta Maurya (322 BCE 297 BCE) and his successor Bindusar. Chanakya played a significant role in the empire's success.
- Bindusara (298-272 BCE): Expanded the empire to the Deccan, known as "Amitraghata" (slayer of enemies). Adopted the Ajivika sect. Deimachus was a Greek ambassador at his court.
- Ashoka (272-232 BCE): After the Kalinga War, which led to massive casualties, he embraced

Buddhism and promoted peace through his **Dhamma (moral laws)**. Organized the 3rd Buddhist Council and spread Buddhism globally.

- Dasharatha (232-224 BCE): Last Mauryan ruler to issue imperial inscriptions. Faced territorial losses.
- Samprati (224-215 BCE): Re-established Mauryan control over disintegrated territories and promoted Jainism.
- Shalishuka (215-202 BCE): Known as a quarrelsome ruler with a negative reputation.
- Devavarman (202-195 BCE): Brief reign, mentioned in the Puranas.
- **Shatadhanvan (195-187 BCE):** Lost territories due to external invasions.
- Brihadratha (187-185 BCE): The last Mauryan emperor, assassinated by Pushyamitra Shunga, marking the end of the Mauryan dynasty.



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