

4. Pattanam Site

Why in News?

- Some excavations have recently uncovered the Pattanam Site in Kerala, revealing that Pattanam was a thriving urban center from the 5th century B.C. to the 5th century A.D.

Highlights

- Pattanam, located in central Kerala, is home to the only multi-cultural archaeological site on the southwestern coast of the Indian subcontinent.
- The excavations have uncovered less than 1% of the site so far, but the evidence has found that it was a thriving urban center around 5th century A.D., with its peak phase from 100 B.C. to A.D. 300.
- It was known as Muziris, the "first emporium" of the Indian Ocean, having rigorous cultural and commercial exchanges between the Greco-Roman classical age and ancient South Indian civilization.
- The name Muziris is believed to have originated from the Tamil word "Muciri", which means "the land of seven rivers".
- The technological, metallurgical, literary, and artistic advances of this phase bear witness to rigorous cultural and commercial exchanges.
- The Pattanam excavations have unearthed over 45 lakh sherds (ceramic fragments); these include approximately 1.4 lakh belonging to the littoral regions of the Mediterranean, the River Nile, the Red Sea, the western and eastern Indian Oceans, and the South China Sea. Recent findings include the seal of a sphinx, native to the ancient Greek city of Thebes
- The absence of religious customs in the artifacts found suggests that there was a secular ethos prevalent in society.
- People of widely differing backgrounds were buried the same way, pointing to the prevalence of a secular society.
- The researchers focusing on Sangam-era literature connect the observation of secularism with the evidence from Sangam sources to point out that the people of the time were secular in every aspect of their highly sophisticated and pluralistic society.
- The Pattanam site holds immense value for those who aspire to meaningful alternatives to community living, looking beyond a casteless society towards a closer connection with nature.