



Iran's Capital Shift to Makran and Alexander's Legacy

For Prelims: [Makran Coastal Region](#), [Alexander the Great](#), [Baluchestan Province](#), [Gulf of Oman](#), [Arabian Sea](#), [Port of Gwadar](#), [Port of Chabahar](#), [Strait of Hormuz](#), [Persian Gulf](#), [Jhelum and Chenab Rivers](#), [Khyber Pass](#), [Indus River](#), [Mauryan Empire](#), [Chandragupta Maurya](#), [Gandhara School of Art](#).

For Mains: Impact of Alexander Invasion on India, significance of Makran Coast.

Source: DTE

Why in News?

Iran plans to **relocate** its capital from **Tehran** to the southern [Makran coastal region](#) due to economic and ecological concerns.

- In ancient times, **Makran** was notable as the region where [Alexander the Great](#) lost a third of his men while **retreating to Macedonia**, after his **Invasion of India (327-325 BCE)**.

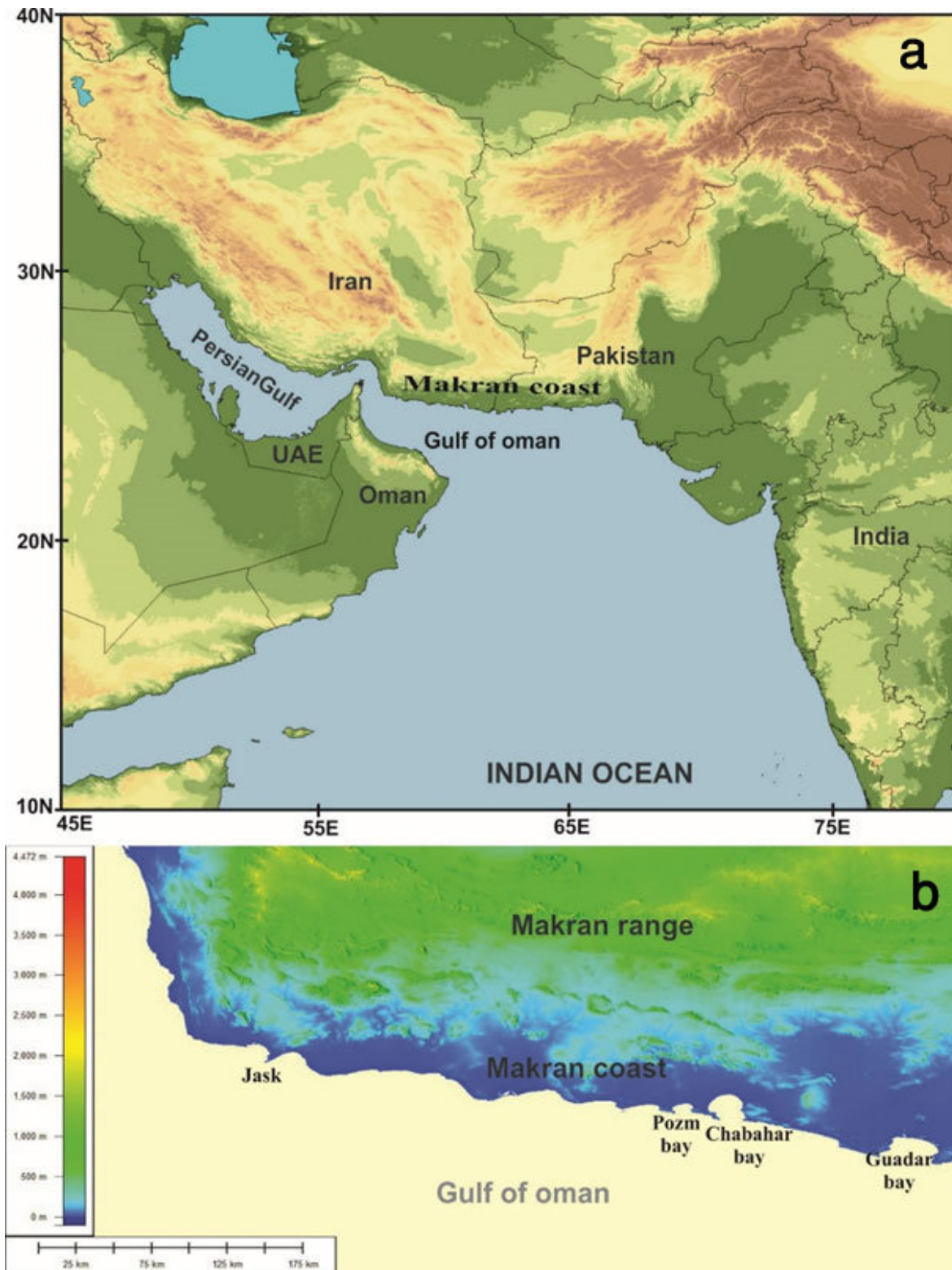
What are Key Facts Regarding Iran's Plan to Relocate its Capital?

- **Historical Context:** Tehran has been Iran's capital for **over 200 years**, having been established during the reign of **Agha Mohammad Khan**, the first ruler of the **Qajar dynasty (1794 to 1925)** of Iran.
- **Planned Relocation:** Iran intends to **move its capital** from Tehran to Makran in **Sistan and Baluchestan Province** due to Tehran's **overpopulation, pollution, water scarcity, and energy shortages**.
 - **The idea of relocating the capital was first proposed during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency in the early 2000s.**
- **Makran's Strategic Importance:** Makran's strategic location near the [Gulf of Oman](#) presents opportunities to boost the **maritime economy** and enhance **national economic prospects**.
 - Makran coast is a major source of **Iran's petroleum reserve** and **coastal trade** due to the presence of ports like **Chabahar**.
 - With over **1,000 kilometers of coastline** and the **Chabahar Free Trade Zone** developed since **2003**, Iran aims to transform Makran into an **international trade corridor** linking **Central Asia to the Indian Ocean**.

Makran

- Makran is part of the **plateau of Balochistan**, which is shared between **Pakistan and Iran**.
- It is a **semi-desert** coastal strip of land, bounded by the [Arabian Sea](#) and **Gulf of Oman**.
- The Makran coast hosts the **Pakistani port of Gwadar** and the **Iranian port of Chabahar**, serving as gateways to the [Strait of Hormuz](#) and the [Persian Gulf](#).
 - The Strait of Hormuz is a **'choke point'**, through which much of the world's oil supply

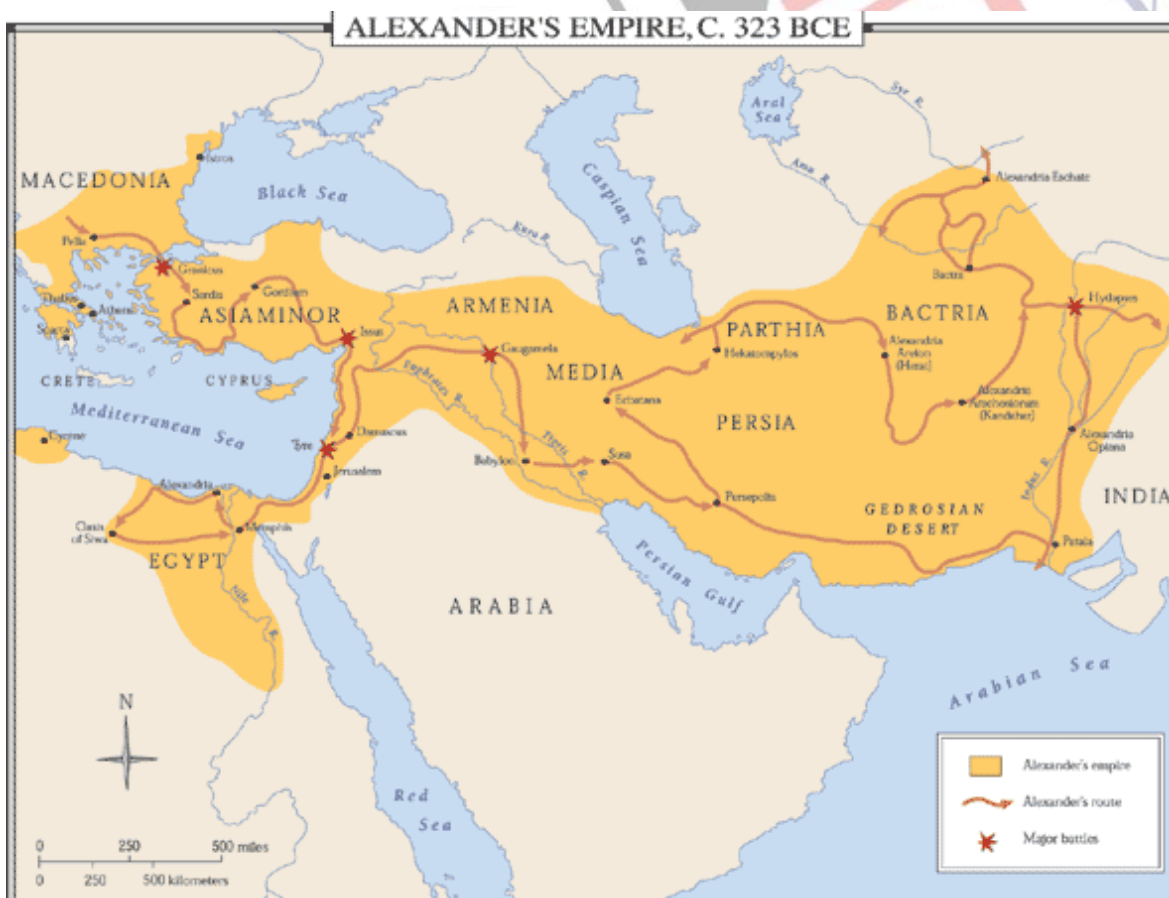
passes and is thus **strategically important**.



What are Key Facts Regarding Alexander's Indian Invasion?

- **About Alexander: Alexander the Great** was king of **Macedonia** (336 BC to 323 BC) and conquered a huge empire that stretched from the **Balkans to modern-day Pakistan**.
 - He remained **undefeated in battle** and is regarded as **one of history's greatest military commanders**.

- **Political Landscape of India:** North-western India was divided into **monarchies and tribal republics** in contrast to **eastern India** which was **united** during rule of **Dhanananda in Magadh**, aiding Alexander's conquest.
 - Rulers like **Ambhi of Taxila and Porus** from the North-west region failed to unite against Alexander.
 - **Ambhi** of Taxila **surrendered** to Alexander, offering troops and resources to bolster his army.
- **Entry through Khyber Pass:** Alexander entered India via the **Khyber Pass** after conquering **Kabul**, reaching the **Indus River**.
- **Key Events:**
 - **Battle of the Hydaspes:** Alexander faced strong **resistance from Porus** at the Jhelum River. After defeating him, Alexander admired his bravery, **restored his kingdom, and made him an ally**.
 - **Halting at the Hyphasis (Beas) River:** Alexander's army, exhausted and fearing a **larger Indian force led by Nandas**, **refused to advance** into the Gangetic Plain and persuaded him to retreat.
- **Forced Retreat:** The Greek historian **Arrian** in his account "**The Anabasis of Alexander**" described the march through the **Gedrosia (Makran Desert)** desert as one of extreme suffering.
 - Alexander led part of his army back to Persia through the harsh Gedrosian (Makran) Desert, aiming to **surpass Cyrus the Great, who had failed to cross it**.
 - **Cyrus the Great (590-529 BC)**, also known as **Cyrus II**, was a **Persian King** who united all the **Iranian tribes**.
 - A large portion of Alexander's army **died from dehydration, exhaustion, and starvation**, with soldiers killing their horses and mules for food.
 - Out of the estimated **1,20,000 infantry and 15,000 cavalry** Alexander took to India, only one-fourth survived the return journey.



What were the Effects of Alexander's Invasion?

- **Direct Contact:** Alexander's invasion was the **first major encounter** between **ancient Europe and India (South Asia)**, laying the groundwork for **cultural, geographical, and trade exchanges** between India and Greece.
 - It opened **four key land and sea routes (three by land and one by sea)**, allowing Greek merchants and craftsmen to trade and settle in the region, strengthening **commercial ties**.
- **Greek Settlements in India:** The invasion led to the establishment of key **Greek cities** in the region, such as **Alexandria** in the Kabul region, and **Boukephala** on the Jhelum river.
- **Geographical Exploration:** Alexander's fleet, led by **Nearchus**, explored the coast from the mouth of the **Indus to the Euphrates river** in the Middle East and provided **historical records** that helped establish **Indian chronology for later events**.
- **Social and Economic Insights:** Alexander's historians provided details on practices like the **sati system**, the **sale of girls** in marketplaces by poor parents, and the **fine breed of oxen** in north-west India.
 - Notably, **200,000 oxen were sent to Macedonia** for use in Greece.
- **Mauryan Expansion:** Alexander's **defeat of petty states** in north-west India paved the way for the **Mauryan Empire's** expansion in the region.
 - **Chandragupta Maurya**, inspired by Alexander's tactics, used the knowledge gained to **overthrow the Nanda dynasty** and found the **Mauryan Empire**.
- **Greek Influence:** Greek culture, including **art, architecture, and philosophy**, influenced Indian society which later incorporated into **Gandhara School of Art**.
 - Gandhara art represented a unique synthesis of **Indian, Greek, and Roman artistic traditions**.

Conclusion

Iran's plan to **relocate its capital** to Makran highlights its efforts to tackle **ecological and economic challenges** while leveraging its strategic location. Alexander's Indian invasion **reshaped the region, fostering cultural, trade, and political exchanges** that influenced both Greek and Indian civilizations for centuries.

Drishti Mains Question:

Q. Analyze the significance of Alexander the Great's invasion of India in shaping the political, cultural, and geographical landscapes of South Asia

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With reference to the history of Indian rock-cut architecture, consider the following statements:(2013)

1. The caves at Badami are the oldest surviving rockcut caves in India.
2. The Barabar rock-cut caves were originally made for Ajivikas by Emperor Chandragupta Maurya.
3. At Ellora, caves were made for different faiths.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

Mains

Q. Gandhara sculpture owed as much to the Romans as to the Greeks. Explain. **(2014)**

Q. Taxila university was one of the oldest universities of the world with which were associated a number of renowned learned personalities of different disciplines. Its strategic locations caused its fame to flourish but unlike Nalanda it is not considered as a university in the modern sense. Discuss. **(2014)**

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