

India adds three new sites to UNESCO Tentative List

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In news— The Archaeological Survey of India has said that three new cultural sites in India, including the iconic Sun Temple at Modhera, the historic Vadnagar town in Gujarat and the rock-cut relief sculptures of Unakoti in Tripura, have been added to the tentative list of Unesco world heritage sites.

More information on the three sites-

Sun Temple at Modhera-

- Modhera Sun Temple is located at Modhera village of Mehsana district, Gujarat, India.
- Modhera finds a mention in the ancient scriptures like Skanda Purana and Brahma Purana.
- The old texts also refer to Modhera and its surrounding areas as Dharmaranya or the forest of righteousness.
- It is situated on the bank of the river Pushpavati.
- It was built after 1026-27 CE during the reign of Bhima I of the Chalukya dynasty.
- The place was later known as Sita ni Chauri and Ramkund locally.
- No worship is offered now and the temple is the Monument of National Importance and is maintained by the Archeological Survey of India.
- The temple is built on 23.6° latitude (approximately near the Tropic of Cancer).
- Earlier, during 1024–1025, Mahmud of Ghazni had invaded Bhima's kingdom, and a force of around 20,000 soldiers had unsuccessfully tried to check his advance at Modhera.
- Historian A. K. Majumdar theorizes that the Sun Temple might have been built to commemorate this defense.
- On a block in western wall of cella, there is an

inscription “Vikram Samvat 1083” upside down carelessly incised in Devnagari script which corresponds to 1026-1027 CE.

Vadnagar town in Gujarat-

- Vadnagar municipality is a multi-layered historic town, whose history stretches back to nearly 8th Century BCE.
- Its ancient name was Anartapura, and was also known as Anandapura. It was a Buddhist location visited by Xuanzang in 640 C.E.
- The epic tale Mahabharata mentions the Anarta Kingdom in the northern part of present-day Gujarat. The oldest Puranic legend about Gujarat is about a king named Anartha.
- The town is mentioned in the Tirtha Mahatmya section of Nagara Khanda of Skanda Purana by the name of Chamatkarapura.
- The Junagadh rock inscription (dating from 150 C.E.) of Western Kshatrapa King Rudradaman I mentions a region called “Anartha” (meaningless) in northern present-day Gujarat.
- Vadnagar is also the birthplace of the current Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi.

Unakoti in Tripura-

- Dating back to the 7th-9th centuries, Unakoti is a ‘Shaiva’ (Saivite) pilgrimage site with marvellous rock carvings, murals with their primitive beauty and waterfalls.
- Literally, Unakoti means ‘one less one crore’ in Hindi and Bengali and it is believed that these many rock carvings (ninety-nine lakh ninety-nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine) are present here.
- In the local Kokborok language, it is called Subrai Khung and is the central tourist spot of the Unakoti District in the Kailashahar Subdivision of Tripura.

Note:

- With this, India now has 52 sites on the Unesco tentative list that capture the diverse cultural and natural wealth of India. In 2021 India had moved a proposal to add six sites to the list.
- These included the Satpura Tiger Reserve, iconic riverfront of the historic city of Varanasi, Megalithic site of Hire Benkal, Maratha Military Architecture in Maharashtra, Bhedaghat-Lametaghat in Narmada Valley-Jabalpur, and temples of Kanchipuram.
- A Tentative List is an inventory of those properties which each State Party intends to consider for nomination.

Further**reading:****<https://journalsofindia.com/unakoti-of-tripura/>**