World Heritage Day

Why in News?

The **International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)** declared April 18th as the **International Day for Monuments and Sites**, also known as **World Heritage Day**, in 1982.
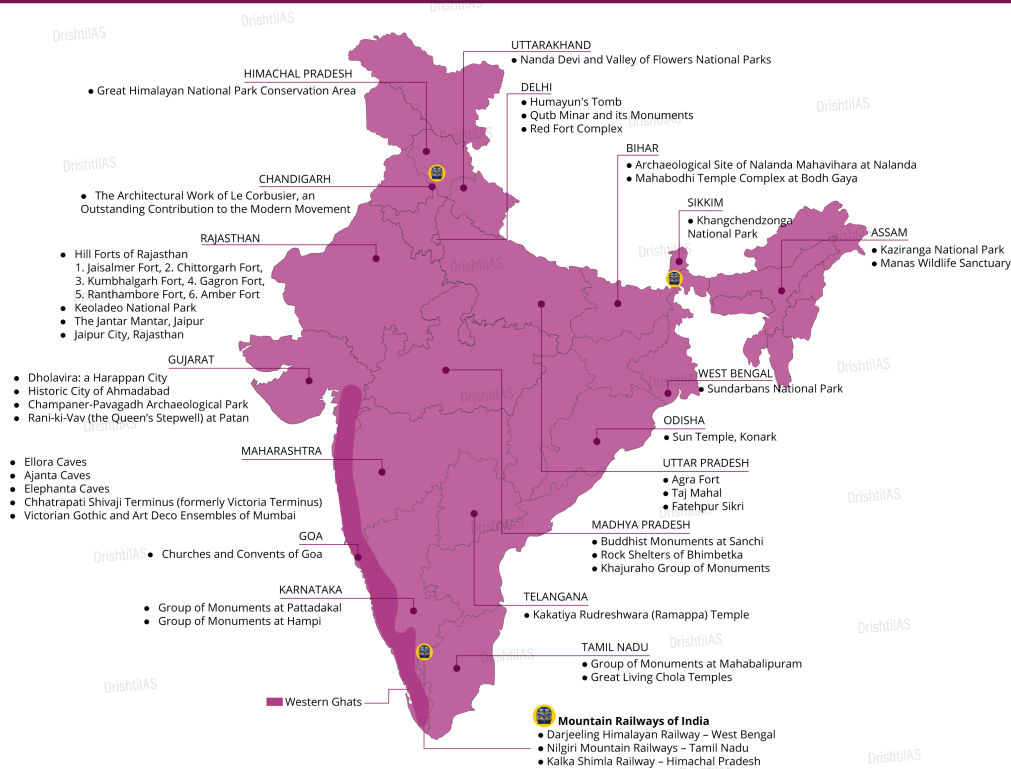
- The **theme for this year is "Heritage Changes,"** which focuses on the role of **cultural heritage in climate action** and its importance in protecting vulnerable communities.

What is the Status of Heritage Sites in India?

- **About:**
  - India is currently home to **40** UNESCO World Heritage Sites**,** making it the country with the sixth-largest number of sites in the world.
  - Out of these, **32 are cultural sites, 7 are natural sites, and one is a mixed-type site, the Khangchendzonga National Park.**
    - The cultural heritage sites in India include **ancient temples, forts, palaces, mosques, and archaeological sites that reflect the rich history and diversity of the country.**
    - The **natural heritage sites in India include** national parks**, wildlife reserves, and natural landscapes** that showcase the country's unique biodiversity and ecological significance.
    - The mixed-type site in India, the **Khangchendzonga National Park**, is known for its **cultural significance as well as its biodiversity,** as it is home to several rare and endangered species.

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UNESCO World Heritage Sites

Map of India showing UNESCO World Heritage Sites by state:

UTTARAKHAND
- Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks

HIMACHAL PRADESH
- Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area

DELHI
- Humayun's Tomb
- Qutb Minar and its Monuments
- Red Fort Complex

BIHAR
- Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda
- Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya

CHANDIGARH
- The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement

SIKKIM
- Khangchendzonga National Park

ASSAM
- Kaziranga National Park
- Manas Wildlife Sanctuary

RAJASTHAN
- Hill Forts of Rajasthan
  1. Jaisalmer Fort, 2. Chittorgarh Fort,
  3. Kumbhalgarh Fort, 4. Gagron Fort,
  5. Ranthambore Fort, 6. Amber Fort
- Keoladeo National Park
- The Jantar Mantar, Jaipur
- Jaipur City, Rajasthan

GUJARAT
- Dholavira: a Harappan City
- Historic City of Ahmadabad
- Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park
- Rani-ki-Vav (the Queen's Stepwell) at Patan

WEST BENGAL
- Sundarbans National Park

ODISHA
- Sun Temple, Konark

MAHARASHTRA
- Ellora Caves
- Ajanta Caves
- Elephanta Caves
- Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus)
- Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai

UTTAR PRADESH
- Agra Fort
- Taj Mahal
- Fatehpur Sikri

GOA
- Churches and Convents of Goa

MADHYA PRADESH
- Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi
- Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka
- Khajuraho Group of Monuments

KARNATAKA
- Group of Monuments at Pattadakal
- Group of Monuments at Hampi

TELANGANA
- Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple

TAMIL NADU
- Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram
- Great Living Chola Temples

■ Western Ghats

Mountain Railways of India
- Darjeeling Himalayan Railway – West Bengal
- Nilgiri Mountain Railways – Tamil Nadu
- Kalka Shimla Railway – Himachal Pradesh

FACTS

❍ **Total Number of World Heritage Sites in India:** 40

❍ **Total Cultural Heritage Sites:** 32

❍ **Total Natural Sites:** 7 (Kaziranga National Park, Manas Wildlife Sanctuary, Western Ghats, Sundarbans National Park, Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks, Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area, Keoladeo National Park)

❍ **Mixed Site:** 1 (Khangchendzonga National Park)

❍ **World Heritage Sites Listed First:** Taj Mahal, Agra Fort, Ajanta Caves and Ellora Caves (all in 1983)

❍ **Latest Addition (2021):** Harappan city of Dholavira (40th site), Kakatiya Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple (39th site)

❍ **Countries With the Most UNESCO World Heritage Sites:** Italy (58), China (56), Germany (51), France (49), Spain (49)

❍ **India is 6th in number of World Heritage Sites in the World**

Drishti IAS

- **Constitutional and Legislative Provisions Related to Indian Heritage:**
  - **Directive Principles of State Policy:** Article 49 puts obligation on the State to **protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest,** declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of national importance.
  - **Fundamental Duty:** Article 51A of Constitution states that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to value and preserve the rich heritage of our culture.
  - **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (AMASR Act) 1958:** It is an act of the Parliament of India that provides for the **preservation of ancient and historical monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance**, for the regulation of archaeological excavations and for the protection of sculptures, carvings and other like objects.
- **Heritage Influence on India's Cultural Identity:**
  - **StoryTellers of India's Glory:** Heritage is the **legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of society** that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and preserved for the benefit of future generations.
  - **Reflection of Unity in Diversity:** India is a museum of **different types, communities, customs, traditions, religions, cultures, beliefs, languages, castes and social system.**
    - But even after having so much external diversity, in Indian culture there is Unity in Diversity.
  - **Tolerating Nature:** Indian society gave every culture the opportunity of prospering that is reflected in its diverse heritage. It does not try to **suppress diversity in favour of**

uniformity.
- **Issues Related to Heritage Management in India:**
  - **Lack of Centralised Database for Heritage Sites:** India lacks a complete national level database with state wise distribution of heritage structure.
    - Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage (INTACH) **has inventoried about 60,000 buildings in around 150 cities** which is still only the tip of the iceberg as there are estimated more than 4000 heritage towns and cities in the country.
  - **Outdated Mechanism of Excavation and Exploration:** Due to the prevalence of outdated mechanisms, Geographic Information System **and** Remote Sensing **are rarely used in exploration.**
    - Also, local bodies involved in urban heritage projects are often not equipped enough to handle heritage conservation.
  - **Environmental Degradation and Natural Disasters:** Heritage sites in India are vulnerable to environmental degradation and natural disasters, such as **pollution, erosion, flooding, and earthquakes, which can cause irreversible damage** to their physical structures and cultural significance.
    - For example, the **Taj Mahal in Uttar Pradesh, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and an iconic symbol of India's cultural heritage,** has faced challenges due to air pollution, which has caused **yellowing and deterioration of its marble.**
  - **Unsustainable Tourism:** Popular heritage sites in India **often face high tourism pressure**, which can result in issues such as **overcrowding, unregulated visitor activities, and inadequate visitor management.**
    - Uncontrolled tourism can cause damage to **heritage structures, impact the local environment, and disrupt the local community's way of life.**
- **Recent Government Initiatives Related to Heritage Conservation**:
  - **Adopt a Heritage Programme**
  - **Project Mausam**

Way Forward

- **Sustainable Funding Models:** Exploring and implementing **innovative funding models for heritage conservation**, such as **public-private partnerships, corporate sponsorships**, crowdfunding, and community-based funding.
  - This can help generate additional financial resources for heritage sites and ensure their sustainable conservation and maintenance.
  - Example: Encouraging corporate sponsorships for specific conservation projects, where **companies can contribute funds and resources in exchange for brand recognition and promotional opportunities.**
- **Technology- enabled Conservation:** Leveraging advanced technologies such as **remote sensing,** 3D scanning**, virtual reality, and data analytics** for documentation, monitoring, and conservation of heritage sites.
  - This can enable more efficient and effective heritage management practices, including condition assessment, preventive conservation, and virtual tourism experiences.
  - **Example:** Using 3D scanning and virtual reality to **create digital replicas of heritage structures**, which can be used for virtual tours, educational purposes, and as a reference for restoration and conservation work.
- **Innovative Measures to Increase Engagement:** Monuments that **do not attract a large number of visitors** and those which have no associated cultural/religious sensitivity should be used as **venues for cultural programmes with the twin objectives:**
  - Promoting the associated intangible heritage
  - Increasing visitor numbers to such sites.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q.1 Safeguarding the Indian Art Heritage is the need of the moment. Discuss. **(2018)**

Q.2 Indian Philosophy and tradition played a significant role in conceiving and shaping the monuments and their art in India. Discuss. **(2020)**

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