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**News:** Ahom burial sites to vie for UNESCO tag

## **Ahom burial sites in Assam**

- The burial sites in **Assam** were used by **Ahom** tribes.
- The **Ahom** rule lasted for about 600 years until the British annexed Assam in 1826.
- **Charaideo**, more than 400 km east of Guwahati, was **the first capital of the Ahom** dynasty founded by Chao Lung Siu–Ka–Pha in 1253.
- Out of 386 **Maidams** or **Moidams** explored so far, 90 royal burials at Charaideo **are the best preserved**, making them showpieces of mound burial tradition of the Ahoms.
- The **Charaideo Maidams** enshrine the mortal remains of the members of the **Ahom** royalty, who used to be buried with their paraphernalia.
- After the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Ahom rulers adopted the Hindu method of cremation and began entombing the cremated bones and ashes in a Maidam at Charaideo.
- The **nomination of the Charaideo Maidams** has attained significance at a time when the country is celebrating the 400<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Lachit Barphukan.
- Lachit Barphukan was a **legendary Ahom** general who fought the Mughals in 1671.

# The World Heritage Convention

- The World Heritage Convention recognizes the way in which people interact with nature, and the fundamental need to preserve the balance between the two.
- Defines the kind of natural or cultural sites which can be considered for inscription on the World Heritage List under UNESCO.
- World Heritage Centre (1992) ensures the day-to-day management of the Convention.
- To be included, the sites must meet at least one of 10 criteria.
- The World Heritage Convention's operational guidelines say that a tentative list is like an inventory of properties a country thinks should be on the World Heritage Site. After UNESCO includes a property in the Tentative List, the country prepares a nomination document that will be considered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.
- Italy has the most number of sites (57) followed by China (55).
- India is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> rank with 52 entries. India has entered super – 40 clubs for World Heritage Site inscriptions along with Italy, China, France, Spain and Germany.
- World Heritage Convention is implemented by UNESCO with the help of International Council on the Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).

- Recently, 4 sites from India were included in the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. They are: Vadnagar town in Gujarat, iconic Sun temple at Modhera, the rock cut sculptures of Unakoti in Tripura and Ahom burial sites in Assam.

## **Benefits of world heritage sites status**

- **Brings international attention** to the need for the preservation and conservation of the sites.
- **Brings tourism** to the site ensuring economic benefits.
- **UNESCO can provide funds for restoration**, preservation and training if required.
- Promotes **close ties with UN system and prestige and support it provides**.
- Sites **become protected under the Geneva Convention against destruction or misuse during wartime**.