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News: Santiniketan finds its place on UNESCO's World Heritage List

- Santiniketan, a town established by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, made it to the UNESCO's World Heritage List on Sunday. Located in West Bengal's Birbhum district, Santiniketan, which means "abode of peace", started taking shape in 1901 and is the place where Tagore laid the foundations of Visva-Bharati University.
- Santiniketan becomes India's 41st World Heritage Site to join the UNESCO List.

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 greatest number of sites (57)** followed by China (55).
- India is in the **3rd rank with 53 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, 5 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, Ahom burial sites in Assam and Shantiniketan in West Bengal.

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**.