‘Maratha Military Landscapes of India’ Inscribed as India’s 44th UNESCO World Heritage Site

Date of Inscription: 15 July 2025
Session: 47th Session of the World Heritage Committee
Location: UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

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Why in News?

At the **47th Session of the World Heritage Committee (WHC)**, UNESCO inscribed **‘Maratha Military Landscapes of India’** as a **World Heritage Site** under the **2024–25 nomination cycle**, making it **India’s 44th World Heritage Site**. This follows the 2024 inscription of the **Moidams of Charaideo in Assam**.

About the Maratha Military Landscape

- The property comprises **12 major fortifications** constructed or expanded by the **Marathas** between the **late 17th and early 19th centuries**.
- These forts are spread across **coastal, hill, plateau, forest, and island terrains**, showcasing **diverse military architecture** adapted to various geographical conditions.
- The forts represent the **Marathas’ military, political, and architectural legacy**, highlighting their ability to establish control over trade routes, defend territories, and innovate fort design based on topography.

List of the 12 Forts

Maharashtra

1. **Salher** – Hill Fort
2. **Shivneri** – Hill Fort
3. **Lohgad** – Hill Fort
4. **Raigad** – Hill Fort
5. **Rajgad** – Hill Fort
6. **Pratapgad** – Hill-Forest Fort
7. **Panhala** – Hill-Plateau Fort

8. **Vijaydurg** – Coastal Fort
9. **Khanderi** – Island Fort
10. **Suvarnadurg** – Island Fort
11. **Sindhudurg** – Island Fort

Tamil Nadu

12. **Gingee Fort** – Hill Fort

Protection Status

- **8 forts** (Shivneri, Lohgad, Raigad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg, Gingee) are protected by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**.
- **4 forts** (Salher, Rajgad, Khanderi, Pratapgad) are under the **Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Maharashtra**.

UNESCO World Heritage Site Criteria

- The site was inscribed under **Criteria (iv)** and **(vi)**:
    - **(iv):** An outstanding example of a type of building or architectural ensemble.
    - **(vi):** Directly associated with traditions, ideas, beliefs, or historical events of universal significance.
- These criteria recognize the **technological, architectural, and cultural significance** of the Maratha fortifications, and their link to **historic events** that shaped Indian history.

UNESCO World Heritage Selection Process: Key Facts

- **Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)** is essential for inscription.
- Sites must meet at least **one of ten selection criteria** (six cultural, four natural – now unified since 2005).
- Each year, countries (States Parties) can nominate **only one site** from their **Tentative List**.
- **India joined the World Heritage Convention in 1977** and currently has:

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    - **44 Inscribed Sites**
    - **62 Sites** on the Tentative List
    - Ranks **6th globally** and **2nd in Asia-Pacific** for the highest number of World Heritage Sites.
- Evaluation is carried out by advisory bodies like:
    - **ICOMOS** – International Council on Monuments and Sites (cultural properties)
    - **IUCN** – International Union for Conservation of Nature (natural properties)
    - **ICCROM** – Provides expert conservation advice and training
- **India is currently a member of the World Heritage Committee (2021–2025).**

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Quick Facts for Prelims

Feature	Details
Total WH Sites in India	44 (as of July 2025)
Latest Addition	Maratha Military Landscapes of India
Previous Addition	Moidams of Charaideo, Assam (2024)
Total Forts in Landscape	12 (11 in Maharashtra, 1 in Tamil Nadu)
UNESCO Criteria	(iv) Architecture, (vi) Historic Association
Main Terrain Types	Hill, Hill-Forest, Plateau, Coastal, Island
Protected by ASI	8 Forts
Protected by Maharashtra Govt	4 Forts
UNESCO Convention Year (India)	1977

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