

UPSC Daily Current Affairs 20 May 2021

UNESCO heritage sites added in India

(Topic- GS Paper I –Art and Culture, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, six sites have been added to India's tentative list of UNESCO world heritage sites.

These sites includes

- Ganga ghats in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
- Temples of Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu
- The Satpura Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh
- The Maratha military architecture in Maharashtra
- The Hire Bengal megalithic site in Karnataka
- Bhedaghat-Lametaghat of Narmada Valley in Madhya Pradesh

According to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, the six proposals were included in the list on April 13 2021.

About World Heritage Site

- UNESCO World Heritage Sites are designated specific locations such as forest areas, mountains, lakes, deserts, monuments, buildings, or cities, etc.
- These sites are officially recognised by the UN and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, also known as UNESCO.
- The list of World Heritage sites is maintained by World Heritage Programme which is administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee
- This committee oversees these sites with the help of UNESCO.
- The objective of this program is to select and preserve such places of the world which are important for humanity in terms of world culture.
- UNESCO provides financial assistance to such sites under certain circumstances.

About UNESCO World Heritage Committee

- It is composed of 21 UNESCO member states which are elected by the UN General Assembly.
- These are areas of importance of cultural or natural heritage as described in the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, 1972.

Criteria for Selection of World Heritage Sites

- These criteria are explained in the World Heritage Convention, 1972.
- These criteria are regularly revised by the World Heritage Committee to reflect the evolution of the World Heritage concept itself.
- Before the revised Operational Guidelines, World Heritage sites were selected based on six cultural and four natural criteria.
- With the adoption of the revised Operational Guidelines, only one set of **ten criteria**.

Tentative lists of Heritage Sites

- All countries are required to submit their Tentative Lists of places which they consider to be a cultural or natural heritage of outstanding universal value and therefore suitable for inscription on the World Heritage List.
- Tentative Lists is not considered exhaustive and need to submit one year prior to the submission of any nomination.
- Countries are required to re-examine and re-submit their Tentative List at least every ten years.
- If any site is listed in World Heritage Sites, then it must be removed from the tentative list.

Related Information

- Recently, Jaipur received the UNESCO World Heritage City certificate

Benefits of a World Heritage City Certificate

- The status of World Heritage City boosts domestic and international tourism, strengthens the local economy and also provides employment to the people.
- The income of the handicrafts and handloom industry also gets the benefits of tourism.
- The government of India sent a proposal in August 2018 to declare Pink City as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Note:

- At present, India has 38 World Heritage Properties.
- Besides, India has 42(48 now) sites listed under Tentative List which is a prerequisite condition for inscription as World Heritage Site.
- **Italy has the highest numbers of World Heritage Sites in the world.**

U.S. to waive sanctions on firm behind Russia's Nord Stream 2

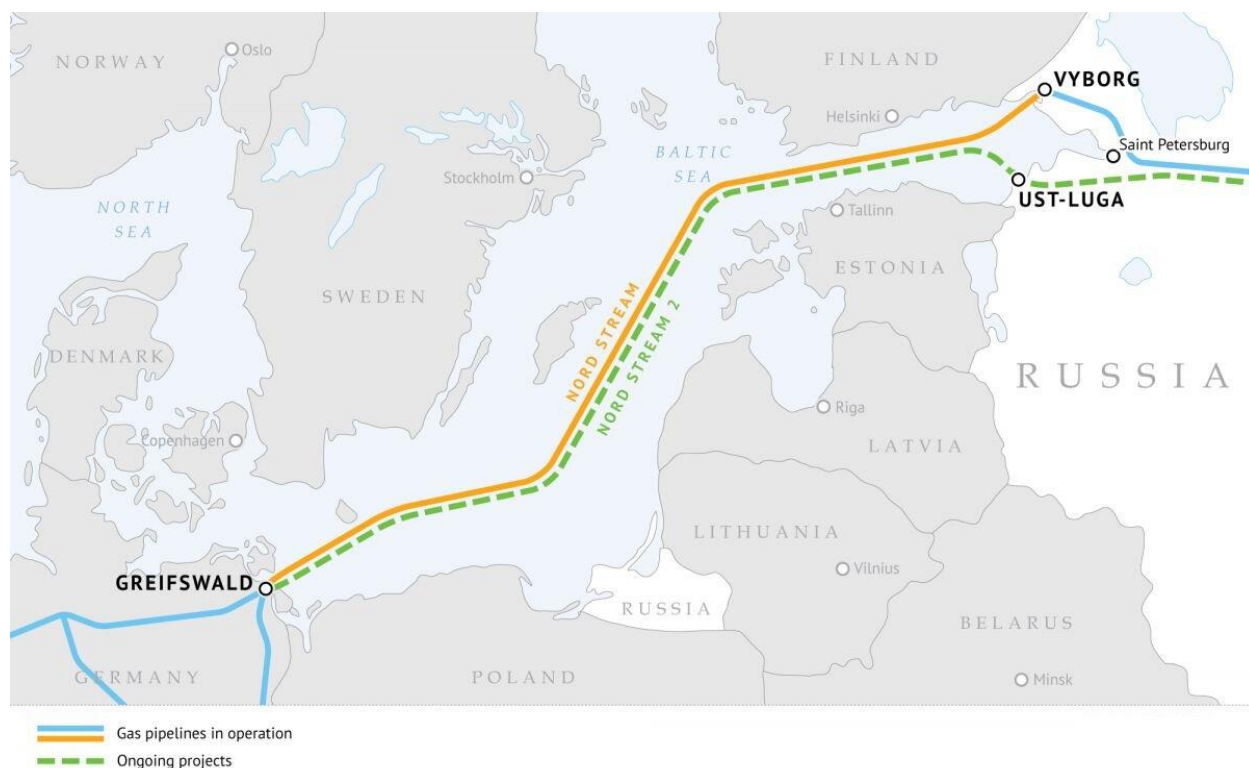
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(Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, the U.S. government will waive sanctions on the company behind Russia's Nord Stream 2 pipeline to Europe and its Chief Executive.

What is Nord Stream 2?



- It is a nearly constructed 1,200-kilometre pipeline from Russia to Germany via the Baltic Sea.
- It will run alongside the already constructed Nord Stream and will double the amount of gas being funnelled through the Baltics to 110 billion cubic meters per year.

Benefits

- It is intended to provide Europe with a sustainable gas supply while providing Russia with more direct access to the European gas market.

- Its proposed route enters the territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of three other countries: Finland, Sweden and Denmark.
- National governments and local authorities will benefit economically from investment and employment in the pipeline.

Related Information

About Baltic members

- The Baltic States, also known as the Baltic countries, are the three countries in northern Europe on the eastern coast of the Baltic Sea: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.
- The Baltic States cooperate on a regional level in several intergovernmental organizations, principally through the Baltic Assembly.
- All three countries are members of the European Union, NATO and the Eurozone.
- Estonia and Latvia are also members of the OECD.

Rain record in Delhi reason

(Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- The National Capital has recently recorded 60 mm rainfall in a 24-hour period on May 24 in 1976 under the impact of cyclonic storm 'Tauktae' and a western disturbance.
- Normally, Delhi gets maximum of 30 mm or 40 mm (24-hour rainfall) in this month. The rain lasts only an hour or less.

Related Information

- **Light Rainfall** - Rainfall recorded below 15 mm is considered light.
- **Moderate Rainfall**- Rainfall recorded between 15 and 64.5 mm is moderate
- **Heavy Rainfall**- Rainfall recorded between 64.5 mm and 115.5 mm is heavy
- **Very heavy rainfall** - Rainfall recorded between 115.6 and 204.4 is very heavy.
- **Extremely heavy rainfall** - Anything above 204.4 mm is considered extremely heavy rainfall.

Cyclone Yaas

(Topic- GS Paper I –Geography, Source- TOI)

Why in the news?

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- Recently, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has said that a low-pressure system could take birth within the next 48 hours and it holds the potential to intensify into a cyclone ‘**Yaas**’ in the Bay of Bengal.
- This system will develop close to the north Andaman Sea around May 22 and reach either Odisha or West Bengal by the evening of May 26.

About Cyclone Yaas

- This cyclone will be the second to form in 2021 and the first over **the Bay of Bengal this year.**
- **Once the cyclone forms, it will acquire the name Yaas, given by Oman.**

Diplomatic immunity

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently the wife of Belgium’s ambassador to South Korea has hit two staff members at a boutique in Seoul last month will now be exercising her diplomatic immunity to avoid criminal charges.

What is diplomatic immunity?

- It is a privilege of exemption from certain laws and taxes granted to diplomats by the country in which they are posted. The custom was formed so that diplomats can function without fear, threat or intimidation from the host country.
- Diplomatic immunity is granted on the basis of two conventions, popularly called the Vienna Conventions — the Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961, and the Convention on Consular Relations, 1963.
- They have been ratified by 187 countries, including South Korea.

What is the extent of this immunity?

- According to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961, the immunity enjoyed by a diplomat posted in the embassy is “inviolable”.
- The diplomat cannot be arrested or detained and his house will have the same inviolability and protection as the embassy.
- It is possible for the diplomat’s home country to waive immunity but this can happen only when the individual has committed a ‘serious crime’, unconnected with their diplomatic role or has witnessed such a crime.
- Alternatively, the home country may prosecute the individual.
- While diplomatic immunity is intended to “insulate” diplomats from harm, it does not insulate their countries from a bad reputation and a blow to bilateral ties.
- The privilege of diplomatic immunity is not for an individual’s benefit.

- If a diplomat acts outside his business of conducting international relations, a question arises over whether his immunity still applies.

Immunity is not same for all diplomats and their families

- The Vienna Convention classifies diplomats according to their posting in the embassy, consular or international organisations such as the UN.

China protests U.S. Navy passage via Taiwan Strait

(Topic- GS Paper II –International Relation, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Recently, China has recently protested the latest passage by a U.S. Navy ship through the Taiwan Strait, calling it a provocation that undermined peace and stability in the region.

More on the news

Reaction from China side

- Col. Zhang Chunhui of China has said that the U.S. actions were “sending wrong signals to the ‘Taiwan independence’ forces, deliberately disrupting and sabotaging the regional situation and endangering peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.”

USA’s Stand

- According to US Navy, the United States military will continue to fly, sail, and operate anywhere international law allows.
- The U.S. Navy’s 7th Fleet said that the guided missile destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur conducted a routine Taiwan Strait transit in accordance with international law.
- The passage “demonstrates the U.S. commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

About the Taiwan Strait



- It is also known as the Formosa Strait separating Taiwan and mainland China.
- The strait is currently part of the South China Sea and connects to the East China Sea to the north.
- The entire strait is on Asia's continental shelf.

China- Taiwan relations

Politics

- China has claimed Taiwan through its “one China” policy since the Chinese civil war forced the defeated Kuomintang, or Nationalist, to flee to the island in 1949 and has vowed to bring it under Beijing’s rule, by force if necessary.
- Taiwan is self-governed and de facto independent; it has never formally declared independence from the mainland.
- Under the “one country, two systems” formula, Taiwan would have the right to run its own affairs; a similar arrangement is used in Hong Kong.

Trade

- China is Taiwan’s top trading partner, with trade totaling \$226 billion in 2018.
- Taiwan runs a large trade surplus with China.
- China, with its 1.3 billion people and much cheaper costs, is also Taiwan’s favorite investment destination with Taiwan companies investing over \$100 billion there, private estimates show.

Military

- China and Taiwan have nearly gone to war several times since 1949, most recently ahead of the 1996 presidential election.
- Taiwan says China has thousands of short- and medium-range ballistic missiles as well as cruise missiles pointed at Taiwan, and that China runs a sophisticated online misinformation campaign to support China-friendly candidates.

Members

- Taiwan is a member of the World Trade Organization, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation and Asian Development Bank under various names

Rajasthan govt. declares mucormycosis an epidemic

(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Amid the increasing instances of mucormycosis or black fungus, which is primarily affecting people recovering from COVID-19, the Rajasthan government declared it an epidemic and a notifiable disease under the **Rajasthan Epidemic Act, 2020**.
- It will be mandatory for the health facilities to report every case of the disease in the State.

Related Information

About Mucormycosis

- Mucormycosis, commonly called black fungus, is a rare but serious fungal infection caused by a kind of fungus called mucormycete, which is abundant in the environment.
- It mainly affects people who have health problems or take medicines that lower the body's ability to fight germs and sickness.

Symptoms

- These include pain and redness around eyes and/or nose, fever, headache, coughing, shortness of breath, bloody vomits, and altered mental status.
- Warning signs can include toothache, loosening of teeth, blurred or double vision with pain.

Who is vulnerable?

- Vulnerable groups include people who have health problems or take medicines that lower the body's ability to fight germs and sickness.

- These include those with diabetes, cancer, or those who have had an organ transplant.

Prevention

- Use masks if you are visiting dusty construction sites.
- Wear shoes, long trousers, long-sleeved shirts and gloves while gardening.
- Maintain personal hygiene including a thorough scrub bath.
- Mucormycosis does not spread between people or between people and animals.

Diagnosis

- It depends on the location of the suspected infection.
- A sample of fluid from your respiratory system may be collected for testing in the lab; otherwise a tissue biopsy or a CT scans of your lungs, sinuses etc may be conducted.

Treatment

- Mucormycosis needs to be treated with prescription antifungal medicine.
- In some cases, it can require surgery.

Government Initiative

- The government has recently started engaging pharmaceutical companies manufacturing amphotericin B to raise the production of anti-fungal drug used to treat mucormycosis, the “**black fungus**” infection seen in **some covid-19 patients**.

About Amphotericin B

- Amphotericin B is an antifungal medication used for serious fungal infections and leishmaniasis.
- The fungal infections it is used to treat include aspergillosis, blastomycosis, candidiasis, coccidioidomycosis, and cryptococcosis.
- It is typically given by injection into a vein.

New storage conditions for Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine

(Topic- GS Paper III –Science and Technology, Source- The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has recently recommended a change to the approved storage conditions of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine which changes the way these vaccines are handled in vaccination centres across the European Union (EU).
- In February, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had allowed undiluted vials of the vaccine to be stored at conventional temperatures for a period of up to two weeks.

What is the change in the storage of these vaccines?

- With the new recommendations, an unopened thawed vial of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine can be stored between 2-8 degrees Celsius for up to a month, which means that it can be stored in a regular refrigerator once it has been taken out of the deep freeze.
- Before this, an unopened thawed vaccine vial could be kept in a regular refrigerator for a period of only up to five days.

Significance

- This increased flexibility in storing and handling of the vaccines is expected to positively impact the vaccine rollout in the EU, which has faced some problems since the vaccination drive started.

Reasons to stored mRNA at such low temperatures

- a. mRNA vaccines need to be stored at much lower temperatures than some other kind of COVID-19 vaccines because RNA is much less stable than DNA, which is due to the sugars that their molecules are made up of.
- b. The second reason for the relative instability of RNA is because of its shape, which is a single strand, while DNA is expressed as a double-stranded helix.

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