

UPSC Daily Current Affairs 26 AUG 2021

Hampi

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

Why in the news?

- The vice-president of India has recently visited musical pillars at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hampi in Vijayanagara district.

About Hampi



- It is the 14th century capital of the Vijayanagar Empire, located in the Tungabhadra basin in Bellary District, Central Karnataka.
- It comprises mainly the remnants of the Capital City of the Vijayanagara Empire.
- **It was founded by Harihara and Bukka in 1336 AD of the Sangama dynasty.**
- It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is also called the "World's Largest Open-air Museum"

About Vijayanagara Empire

- Vijayanagara or “city of victory” was the name of both a city and an empire.
- It stretched from the river Krishna in the north to the extreme south of the peninsula.

It was ruled by four dynasties:

1. **Sangama (1336 to 1485 A.D; Founder: Harihara I).**
2. **Saluva (1485 to 1505 A.D.; Founder: Saluva Narasimha).**
3. **Tuluva (1491 to 1570 A.D.; Founder: Tuluva Narasa Nayaka; Famous King: Krishnadeva Raya).**

4. Aravidu (1542 to 1646 A.D.; Founder: Tirumala).

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Cabinet approves highest ever FRP for sugarcane farmers

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

Why in the news?

- The Union government has recently increased the minimum price that sugar mills must pay to sugar cane farmers by ₹5 a quintal, setting the fair and remunerative price (FRP) at ₹290 a quintal for the 2021-22 sugar seasons, which runs from October to September.
- The approval is the highest ever FRP, approved for sugarcane farmers.

Benefits of the decision

- The decision will benefit five crore sugar cane farmers and their dependents as well as five lakh workers employed by sugar mills and related industries

About Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane

- It is announced by the Central Government is decided based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) after consulting the State Governments and associations of the sugar industry.
- **FRP is given only for Sugar cane.**

Related Information

About Minimum Support Price

- The MSP is the rate at which the government buys grains from farmers.

Major objectives of MSP

- To support the farmers' interest from distress sale.
- To procure food grains for the public distribution system.
- To provide stability in agriculture production.
- MSP may impact the market prices to some extent; however, the MSP policy of the government does not aim to influence the market price of the crops.

Fixation of MSP

- The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, estimates the MSP in the country.
- **CACP recommends MSP for 22 crops and Fair & Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane.**
- For sugarcane, FRP is declared by the Department of Food & Public Distribution

Factors taken into consideration for fixing MSP include:

1. Cost of cultivation,
2. Demand and supply,
3. Price trends in the market, both domestic and international,
4. Inter-crop price parity,

5. Terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture,
6. A minimum of 50% as the margin over the cost of production, and
7. Likely implications of MSP (inflation) on consumers of that product

MSP Calculation

This MSP is usually estimated based on three types of calculation methods.

1. A2: Under this, MSP is set 50% higher than the amount farmers spend on farming including spending on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and labour.
2. A2+FL: It includes A2 plus an assigned value of unpaid family labour.
3. C2: Under C2, the estimated land rent and the cost of interest on the money taken for farming are added on top of A2+FL.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (Unama)

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

Why in the news?

- Recently hundreds of Afghan employees of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (Unama) have being left to the mercy of the Taliban.

About United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (Unama)



- **It is a UN Special political mission that was established to help rebuild the country shortly after the 2001 US-led invasion.**
- UNAMA was established on 28 March 2002 by **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1401.**
- Its original mandate was to support the implementation of **the Bonn Agreement (December 2001).**
- It helps to assist the state and the people of Afghanistan in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development.
- The United Nations has been involved in the region since 1946 when Afghanistan joined the General Assembly. Agencies such as UNICEF have been operating in Afghanistan since 1949

'Kazind-21' exercise

(Topic- GS Paper III–Defence, Source-Livmint)

Why in the news?

- The fifth edition of the Indo-Kazakhstan joint training exercise, “Kazind-21” will be conducted at the training node in Aisha Bibi, Kazakhstan, from August 30 to September 11.

About Kazind-21’ exercise

- The exercise is a joint training between both armies, which will boost bilateral relations between India and Kazakhstan.
- The exercise will provide an opportunity for the Armed Forces of India and Kazakhstan to train for counter-terrorism operations in a mountainous, rural scenario under a UN mandate.
- The scope of the joint exercise includes professional exchange, planning and execution of operations in a counter-terrorism environment at the sub-unit level, and sharing expertise on skills in arms, combat shooting, and experience in counter-insurgency operations.
- The exercise will also strengthen confidence, interoperability and enable sharing of best practices between the armed forces of India and Kazakhstan.

SAMRIDH scheme

(Topic- GS Paper III–Economics, Source-The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- Minister of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has recently launched Startup Accelerators of MeitY for Product Innovation, Development and Growth (SAMRIDH) programme.

About SAMRIDH Scheme

- It will create a conducive platform for Indian software product startups to enhance their products and secure investments for scaling their business.
- The SAMRIDH programme will focus on accelerating the 300 start-ups by providing customer connect, investor, connect, and international immersion in the next three years.
- It will also facilitate equal matching investment by the accelerator/investor.
- The programme aims to further the Indian start-up growth which has seen the emergence of 63 unicorns with a total valuation of \$168 billion.

Implemented by

- The programme is being implemented by MeitY Startup Hub (MSH).

Significance

1. It will help to fulfil the employment in traditional as well as new-age industries mission of Government.
2. It will not only provide funding support to startups but will also help in bringing skill sets together which will help them become successful.

Havana Syndrome

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

Why in the news?

- Recently, a report by the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) has found directed microwave radiation to be the “plausible” cause of the **Havana Syndrome**.

About ‘Havana syndrome’

- In late 2016, US diplomats and other employees stationed in Havana reported feeling ill after hearing strange sounds and experiencing odd physical sensations in their hotel rooms or homes.
- The symptoms included nausea, severe headaches, fatigue, dizziness, sleep problems, and hearing loss, which have since come to be known as “**Havana Syndrome**”.

Highlights of the National Academies of Sciences report

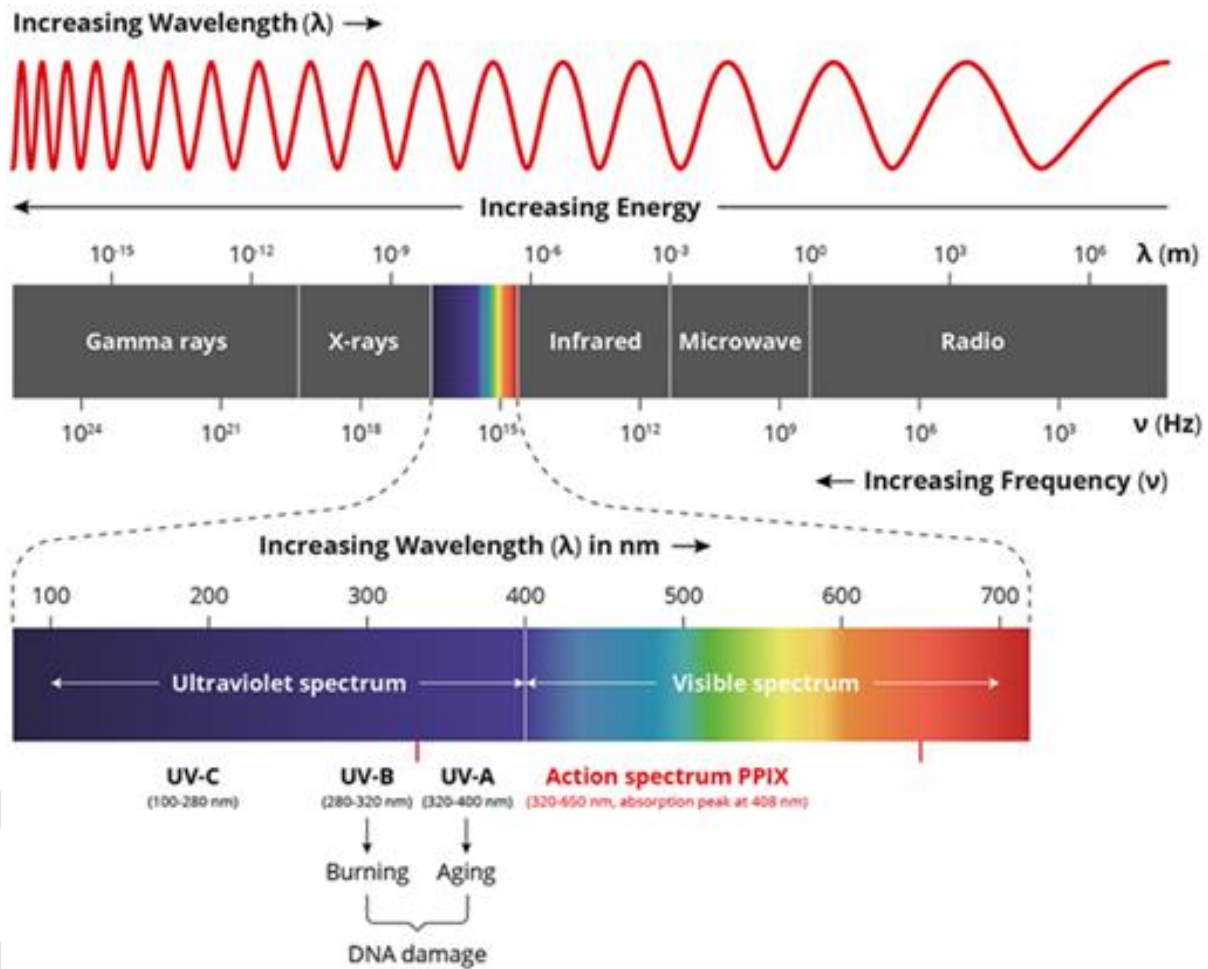
- The NAS report, titled “An assessment of illness in US government employees and their families at overseas embassies”, by a committee of 19 experts in medicine and other fields examined four possibilities to explain the symptoms —

1. Infection
2. Chemicals
3. psychological factors
4. Microwave energy.

- The report claimed that microwave weapons used beams of high-frequency electromagnetic radiation to heat the water in a human target’s skin, causing pain and discomfort.

Related Information

About Electromagnetic Spectrum



- The electromagnetic spectrum is a range of frequencies, wavelengths and photon energies covering frequencies from below 1 hertz to above 10²⁵ Hz corresponding to wavelengths that are a few kilometres to a fraction of the size of an atomic nucleus in the spectrum of electromagnetic waves.
- Generally, in vacuum electromagnetic waves tend to travel at speeds that are similar to that of light.

About Microwave Weapons

- "Microwave weapons" are supposed to be a type of direct energy weapons, which aim for highly focused energy in the form of sonic, laser, or microwaves, at a target.
- People exposed to high-intensity microwave pulses have reported a clicking or buzzing sound as if seeming to be coming from within your head.
- It can have both acute and long-term effects — without leaving signs of physical damage.
- The concerns have been raised on whether they can damage the eyes or have a carcinogenic impact in the long term.

'Forum for Decarbonizing Transport' in India

(Topic- GS Paper III–Environment, Source-The Hindu)

Why in the news?

- NITI Aayog and World Resources Institute (WRI) have jointly launched the 'Forum for Decarbonizing Transport' in India as part of the NDC-Transport Initiative for Asia (NDC-TIA) project.

About Forum for Decarbonizing Transport

- The forum will one-stop platform to initiate dialogues for the development of uniform policies and help achieve specific results in reducing emissions from the transport sector.

Aims

- The project aims at bringing down the peak level of GHG emissions (transport sector) in Asia (in line with a well below 2-degree pathway), resulting in problems like congestion and air pollution.
- It will work in close coordination with all the stakeholders to formulate strategies and develop appropriate business models to accelerate electric mobility in India.

Significance

- In India, transport is the third most CO₂ emitting sector with road transport contributing to more than 90% of total CO₂ emissions.
- The Indian government through its various policies is promoting decarbonization of transport with a major focus on electric mobility.
- Hence, a coordinated effort like this forum will help enable investment, encourage adoption, and ensure fair operation in the electric vehicles industry.

About the NDC-Transport Initiative for Asia (NDC-TIA) project

- The NDC Transport Initiative for Asia (TIA 2020-2023) is a joint programme of seven organisations that will engage China, India, and Vietnam in promoting a comprehensive approach to decarbonizing transport in their respective countries.
- The project is part of the International Climate Initiative (IKI).
- **The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) support the initiative based on a decision adopted by the German Bundestag.**

India and NDC-TIA

- The NDC-TIA India component focuses on developing a coherent strategy of effective policies and the formation of a multi-stakeholder platform for decarbonizing transport in the country.
- **NITI Aayog is the implementing partner for the India component of the project.**

Delta sub-lineage AY.12 found in India

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

Why in the news?

- Recently, a new sublineage AY.12, of the delta variant of SARS-CoV -2 that was recently classified in Israel is now being seen in many states in the country.

About Delta Variant

- The Delta variant (B.1.617.2) has birthed several sub-lineages called ‘Delta plus’ variants that bear most of its characteristic mutations but are different in other ways.
- **One of these sub-lineages, called AY.12, has all the characteristic Delta mutations except one.**
- The spike in cases in Israel is of concern because it is a country with nearly 60% of its adults fully vaccinated and reports that the Pfizer vaccine’s effectiveness in that country is significantly less than what emerged over clinical trials.
- The Delta variant is one of the three subtypes of the SARS-CoV-2 B.1.617 lineage — namely the B.1.617.2.
- Researchers have been discovering new information about the variant each day.
- There are five distinct clades within Delta — clades A to E —and Delta D clade is the most prominent in the current pandemic, according to researchers from a consortium in Israel.
- Right now there is a total of 12 sublineages (earlier ones are AY.1, AY.2, AY.3). While AY.4 to AY.11 is predominantly found in the United Kingdom, AY.12 is a sub-lineage detected predominantly in Israel.
- The Delta variant, because of its preponderance in coronavirus cases globally, has several sub-lineages, making it necessary to reclassify them as not doing so would make naming them unwieldy.

Related Information

About “variant of interest”

- It means that the genetic changes involved are predicted or known to affect transmissibility, disease severity, or immune escape.
- It is also an acknowledgement of the fact that the variant has caused significant community transmission in multiple countries and population groups.

Coronavirus variants

- The World Health Organization has identified 11 coronavirus variants so far (there are 24 letters in the Greek alphabet).
- There are four variants of concern:
 1. Alpha
 2. Beta
 3. Gamma
 4. Delta
- There are currently seven variants, including the Lambda that the WHO classifies as “variants of interest”.
 1. Epsilon
 2. Zeta
 3. Eta
 4. Theta
 5. Iota
 6. Kappa
 7. Lambda
- These were all recently named after letters of the Greek alphabet to avoid linkage with the country of their origin that had been happening until then.

Concern

- The potential of emerging variants to bypass the immunity gained through vaccination means that there could be fresh waves of infections even in populations that were being considered close to reach community-level protection.

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