Syllabus subtopic: Indian Culture - Salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

Prelims and Mains focus: about the SC judgement; about Hampi and its monuments

News: The Supreme Court confirmed the Karnataka government authorities’ decision to demolish restaurants, hotels, guest houses and other buildings constructed in Virupapura Gaddi, an oval islet formed by the Tungabhadra river and located west of the Hampi World Heritage site.

Reason

Spelling relief for conservationists and a victory for the State government, the SC Bench concluded that the constructions were in violation of the Mysore Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act of 1961.

About the SC judgement

• Agreeing with the Karnataka High Court decision that the Hampi World Heritage Area Management Authority was empowered to order the demolition of the illegal buildings on the islet, the apex court ordered the authorities to proceed with their demolition work within a month of this judgment.

• The court upheld the validity of a 1988 State notification that “clearly indicates the entire village of Virupapura Gaddi as a protected zone.” It said a place need not necessarily boast a monument to be protected.

• The court further notes how the Archaeological Survey of India has itself recognised the historical importance of Virupapura Gaddi.

About Hampi
Hampi or Hampe (in Kannada), also referred to as the Group of Monuments at Hampi, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in east-central Karnataka, India.

It became the pilgrimage centre of the Hindu religion. It was the capital of Vijayanagara Empire in the 14th century.

Chronicles left by Persian and European travellers, particularly the Portuguese are saying that state Hampi was a prosperous, wealthy and grand city near the Tungabhadra River, with numerous temples, farms and trading markets.

By 1500 CE, Hampi-Vijayanagara was the world's second-largest medieval-era city after Beijing, and probably India's richest at that time, attracting traders from Persia and Portugal.

The Vijayanagara Empire was defeated by a coalition of Muslim sultanates; its capital was conquered, pillaged and destroyed by sultanate armies in 1565 (Battle of Tallikota), after which Hampi remained in ruins.

Hampi predates the Vijayanagara Empire; there is evidence of Ashokan epigraphy, and it is mentioned in the Ramayana and the Puranas of Hinduism as Pampaa Devi Tirtha Kshetra.

Hampi continues to be an important religious centre, housing the Virupaksha Temple, an active Adi Shankara-linked monastery and various monuments belonging to the old city.

Hampi has around 500 of monuments and other attractions. Some of them are named below:-

1. **Virupaksha Temple** is the oldest and principal temple in Hampi. This temple located on the south bank of the river Tungabhadra. It has been an important pilgrimage centre for the worshipers of lord Shiva.
2. **Hampi Bazaar**, also known as Virupaksha Bazaar, this street is located in front of the Virupaksha temple.

3. **Courtesans' Street**: Once the liveliest of all the temple streets in Hampi, the Courtesans' Street lies in front of the Achyuta Raya’s Temple.

4. **Achyuta Raya’s Temple**: This temple is an example of Vijayanagara style temple architecture in its most advanced form than any other temples in Hampi. The temple dedicated to Lord Tiruvengalanatha, a form of Vishnu.

5. **Sasivekalu Ganesha**: Thanks to the resemblance the giant monolithic Ganesha statue is locally called Sasivekalu (mustard seed) Ganesha. This is located on the southern foothill of the Hemakuta Hill.

6. **Hazaar Rama Temple**: The first thing comes to mind on seeing this temple, or more precisely its walls, is the locally popular comic strips of Hindu mythology, Ramayana.