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Current affairs summary for prelims

30 April, 2024

Article 31C

Context: *The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, discussed the existence of Article 31C alongside a case about government acquisition of private property.*

➢ **Introduction of Article 31C:**
- Introduced by the Constitution (Twenty-fifth) Amendment Act, 1971.
- Aimed to protect laws enacted to ensure the distribution of material resources for the common good (Article 39(b)) and prevent concentration of wealth to the common detriment (Article 39(c)).
- Responded to the Bank Nationalisation Case, highlighting issues with compensation in government acquisition laws.
- Article 31C aimed to shield laws furthering directive principles from being challenged on grounds of violating fundamental rights.

➢ **The Journey of Article 31C:**
- Challenged in the Kesavananda Bharati case (1973), leading to the striking down of a portion of Article 31C.
- Expanded under the Constitution (Forty-second) Amendment Act to protect all directive principles from challenges under Articles 14 and 19.
- Clauses 4 and 5 of the amendment were struck down in the Minerva Mills case (1980), questioning the extent of Parliament's amending power.

➢ **The Ongoing Case in SC:**
- Challenge to Chapter VIII-A of the Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Act, 1976, allowing government acquisition of "cessed" properties.
- Debate centres on whether Article 39(b) includes private resources like cessed properties.
- Previous decisions upheld the amendment citing protection under Article 31C.

➢ **Arguments in the SC:**
- Petitioners argue that the pre-amendment version of Article 31C ceased to exist with the 42nd Amendment.
- Centre contends that the doctrine of revival should apply, restoring the post-Kesavananda Bharati position on Article 31C.
- Justices debate the implications of striking down constitutional amendments and the revival of pre-amended provisions.

➢ **Article 31 and amended provisions:**
- **Article 31:** Protects against deprivation of property without authority of law and allows compulsory acquisition or requisitioning of property for public purpose by law.
- **Article 31A:** Protects laws related to acquisition of estates and provides for compensation as per the law.
- **Article 31B:** Validates certain Acts listed in the Ninth Schedule and protects them from being challenged on grounds of violating fundamental rights.
- **Article 31C:** Protects laws implementing directive principles from fundamental rights challenges and ensures they are not deemed void.
- **Article 31D:** Empowers Parliament to establish authorities for urban local self-government, strengthening local governance in urban areas.

Heating of Indian Ocean

Context: *A new study in Science Direct predicts that the Indian Ocean could warm between 1.7–3.8 degrees Celsius per century from 2020 to 2100.*

➢ **Indian Ocean Warming:**
- Predicted to warm at a rate of 1.7–3.8 degrees Celsius per century between 2020 and 2100.
- Unprecedented and accelerated warming could continue unless greenhouse gas emissions are reduced.

➢ **Socio-Economic and Environmental Impacts:**
- Potential for widespread socio-economic impacts and significant effects on biodiversity, especially coral reefs.
- Implications for southwest monsoon season, affecting India's annual rainfall and other South Asian countries.
- Increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events like tropical cyclones and floods.
- Rising sea levels due to thermal expansion could affect coastal regions.

➢ **Historical and Projected Warming:**
- Indian Ocean basin heated at a rate of 1.2°C per century between 1950 and 2020.
- Northwestern parts experienced significant warming while southeastern parts had the least.
- Projection indicates a dramatic increase in heat content of the ocean's surface and below.

➢ **Shifts in Sea Surface Temperatures:**
- Shift in seasonal cycle of surface temperatures due to warming.
- Projections suggest minimum sea surface temperatures exceeding 28°C all year round by the end of the 21st century.
- Increased likelihood of tropical cyclones and heavy rainfall events.

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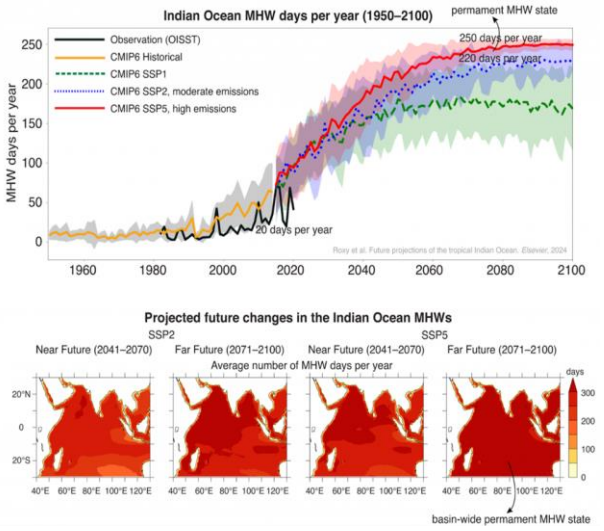
➢ **Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) and Other Phenomena:**
- Changes expected in the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), influencing monsoon rainfall and tropical cyclone formation.
- Frequency of extreme IOD events may increase while moderate events decrease by the end of the century.

➢ **Marine Heatwaves and Ocean Chemistry:**
- Expected increase in marine heatwave frequency and intensity, leading to habitat destruction and fisheries sector impact.
- Projection of pH decrease and decline in chlorophyll levels, affecting marine ecosystem health and productivity.

➢ **Recommendations:**
- Urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Conservation of marine ecosystems and improvement of forecasting capabilities crucial for resilience.
- Promotion of adaptive agriculture and international collaboration essential for food security and biodiversity preservation.



Indian Space Situational Assessment Report (ISSAR)

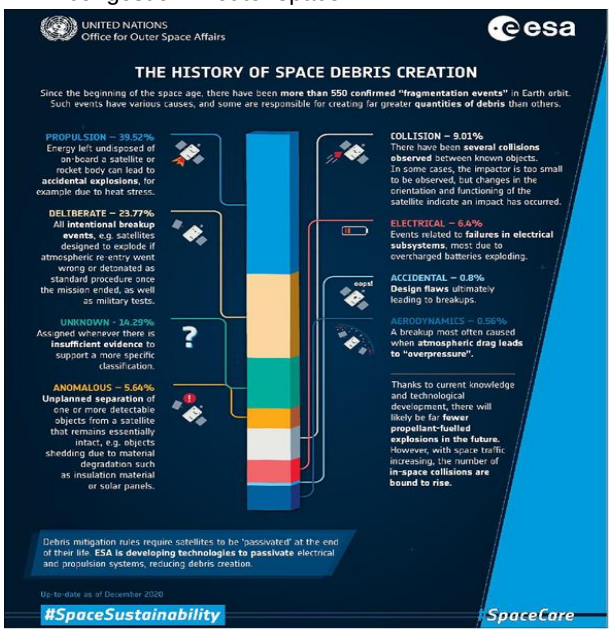
Context: *The Indian Space Situational Assessment Report (ISSAR) for 2023 indicates that there was an increase in the number of space objects launched into orbit compared to 2022.*

➢ **Report Overview:**
- Compiled by ISRO System for Safe and Sustainable Space Operations Management (IS4OM).
- Released in April by ISRO Chairman S. Somanath.
- Highlights the growing trend of space object population, indicating increased accessibility to space and diverse applications of space technology.

➢ **Space Object Population:**
- In 2023, more space objects were placed in orbit compared to 2022.
- 3,143 objects added from 212 launches and on-orbit break-up events in 2023, compared to 2,533 objects from 179 launches in 2022.
- Five major on-orbit break-up events occurred in 2023, resulting in a net addition of 69 fragmented objects to space debris population.

➢ **Indian Scenario:**
- 21 satellites re-entered the atmosphere by the end of 2023, with eight Indian satellites re-entering in 2023.
- Megha-tropiques-1 underwent controlled re-entry in 2023.
- 82 rocket bodies from Indian launches were placed in orbit till 2023, with 52 PSLV-C3 debris still in orbit by the end of 2023.

➢ **Close Approaches and Collision Avoidance Maneuvers (CAMs):**
- ISRO conducts analyses through IS4OM-ISTRAC to predict close approaches by other space objects.
- 1,37,565 close approach alerts received from USSPACECOM.
- 3,033 alerts for close approaches within 1 km for ISRO satellites.
- 23 CAMs carried out in 2023 compared to 21 in 2022 and 19 in 2021.
- Increasing trend in CAMs correlates with growing congestion in outer space.



➢ **Mission Safety:**
- No concerning close approaches detected for Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-L1 missions during their respective phases.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Hasdeo Aranya Movement

Alok Shukla, convenor of the Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan and founding member of the Hasdeo Aranya Bachao Sangharsh Samiti, has been awarded the 2024 Goldman Prize from Asia for Hasdeo Aranya Movement recently.

About Hasdeo Aranya Movement:

- The Hasdeo Aranya Movement is a grassroots environmental campaign led by activists and local communities around the Hasdeo Aranya region in Chhattisgarh.
- The movement **aimed to save the biodiversity-rich forests of Hasdeo Aranya** from the adverse impacts of **proposed coal mining projects**.
- Through community **campaigns** and **advocacy efforts,** the movement successfully prevented the **establishment of 21 planned coal mines** in the region, preserving approximately **445,000 acres of forests**.
- The forests act as a catchment area for the **Hasdeo river, a tributary of the Mahanadi,** which provides water for irrigation across 741,000 acres of farmland.
- The region is home to **nearly 15,000 Adivasi** (Indigenous peoples) who depend on Hasdeo Aranya forests for their livelihood, cultural identity and sustenance.
- Hasdeo Aranya is also **rich in coal reserves**, leading to attempts by governments to initiate mining operations.

Goldman Prize:

- Prize was founded in **1989 by Richard and Rhonda Goldman.**
- The prize aims to recognize and honor grassroots environmental activists from around the world for their efforts to protect the environment and promote sustainability.
- It is awarded in six regions: **Asia**, **Africa**, **Europe**, **North America**, **South** and **Central America**, and **islands** and **island nations**.
- Each winner of the Goldman Prize receives a **monetary award of $200,000** to support their ongoing environmental work and initiatives.

Hangor Class Submarine

The first Hangor Class Submarine was recently launched on April 26 at a Wuhan shipyard in China.

About the Hangor Class Submarine:

- The Hangor Class Submarine is a **diesel-electric attack submarine**, representing an export variant of the **Chinese Type 039A Yuan class.**
- It is built for **Pakistan**, marking the beginning of Pakistan Navy's plan to induct a total of eight submarines of this **class by 2028**.
- The submarine is **named after the PNS Hangor**, which achieved fame during the **1971** war for sinking the Indian frigate **INS Khukri.**
- The submarine **utilizes diesel engines for surface** or snorkeling operations, while it relies on a battery-powered system for submerged operation.
- **Equipped with an Air-Independent Propulsion (AIP) system**, the submarine can enhance its endurance underwater and its overall stealth capabilities.
- It is **armed with six 21-inch torpedo tubes** and possesses the capability to launch anti-ship missiles and **Babur-3 subsonic cruise missiles** with a **range of 450 km**.
- In comparison to **India's Kalvari class submarines**, the Hangor class boasts a **larger size and incorporates AIP systems**, potentially providing it with advantages in terms of underwater endurance and stealthiness.

ISHAN Initiative

Recently, the Airports Authority of India has commenced work on the ISHAN Initiative.

About ISHAN Initiative:

- The ISHAN (Indian Single Sky Harmonized Air Traffic Management) **Initiative is a project** undertaken **by the Airports Authority of India** (AAI) to consolidate India's fragmented airspace management system.
- The objective of ISHAN **is to merge the country's four Flight Information Regions (FIRs) in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai** and sub-FIRs into a single entity based in Nagpur.
- ISHAN seeks to **unify these FIRs under a single authority in Nagpur**.
- This consolidation aims to enhance **efficiency**, **safety** and **seamlessness** in air traffic operations by streamlining coordination, **reducing congestion** and increasing capacity in Indian airspace.
- The initiative aims to streamline operations, enhance capacity, and alleviate congestion in Indian airspace, **benefiting both airlines and passengers.**

Place in News

Cambodia

Recently, Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla held a meeting with the Telecom Ministry, Reserve Bank of India, and CBL to address fraudsters in Cambodia exploiting thousands of Indian SIM cards and bank accounts for scams.

Cambodia (Capital: Phnom Penh)

Location: Cambodia, officially known as the Kingdom of Cambodia, is a country located in Mainland Southeast Asia.

Boundaries: Cambodia shares its borders with **Vietnam** (East), **Thailand** (Northwest), **Laos** (North) and the **Gulf of Thailand** (Southwest).

Physical Features:

- The highest point in Cambodia is **Phnom Aural,** located in the Cardamom Mountains range in southwestern Cambodia.
- The **Mekong River** flows through the eastern part of Cambodia.
- The **Tonle Sap River**, an important tributary of the Mekong, flows through the central part of the country.
- Southeast Asia's largest freshwater lake, **Tonle Sap Lake** located in central Cambodia.
- Cambodia possesses various mineral resources including **bauxite, gold, iron ore, gemstones and manganese**.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Which state government launched Project Nilgiri Tahr? **– Tamil Nadu**
- In which state is Alagar Temple located? **– Tamil Nadu**
- Harshit Kumar, who won a gold medal in the 21st U-20 Asian Athletics Championship 2024, belongs to which sports? **– Hammer throw**
- Which port has been approved as India's first transshipment port by the shipping ministry? **– Vizhinjam Port**
- What is nephrotic syndrome? **– A kidney disorder causing excessive protein in urine**