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1. ISRO's 'zero orbital debris' milestone



Orbital threat: With the rise in the number of satellites in orbit around the earth, space debris has become a pressing issue.

Introduction

Space debris has emerged as a significant concern with the proliferation of satellites orbiting Earth. ISRO's recent PSLV-C58/XPoSat mission marks a milestone in addressing this issue by practically eliminating orbital debris.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has said its PSLV-C58/XPoSat mission has practically left zero debris in earth orbit. The space agency explained that the last stage of the Polar Satellite Launch vehicle (PSLV) used in the mission was transformed into a kind of orbital station — called the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM-3) — before it was left to re-enter the earth's atmosphere instead of floating in orbit once its mission was completed.

Thus, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle Orbital Experimental Module (POEM) repurposes the spent fourth stage of a PSLV rocket as an orbital platform. An orbital platform or station is a space station, generally constructed for one purpose, that orbits a celestial body such as a planet, asteroid, or star.

ISRO said that after it completed the primary mission of injecting all satellites into their target orbits, the fourth stage of the PSLV was transformed into the POEM-3. It was subsequently de-orbited from 650 km to 350 km, rendering it more susceptible to being pulled towards the earth and burning up in the atmosphere.

POEM-3's Success

POEM-3, deployed during the PSLV C-58 mission, achieved significant milestones, hosting various experiments and completing 400 orbits.

Significance

ISRO's initiative holds significance amidst the growing threat of space debris, which jeopardizes space assets and poses risks to operational satellites.

Debris Management Efforts

The escalation of space debris presents challenges to space agencies, necessitating concerted efforts to mitigate risks and prevent collisions.

Agencies like ISRO are taking proactive measures to mitigate space debris risks, emphasizing the need for international cooperation and adherence to mitigation guidelines.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & technology

Source: Indian Express

2. Why text of amended tax treaty with Mauritius triggered stock sell-offs

Why in News?

India has signed a protocol amending its tax treaty with Mauritius with an aim to plug treaty abuse for tax evasion and avoidance. The text of the amended treaty, however, has raised concerns of greater scrutiny on investments, and led to a sell-off in stock markets by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs).

Introduction of the Principal Purpose Test

India and Mauritius signed a protocol at Port Louis in March amending the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) between the two nations.

INDIA AMENDS DOUBLE TAXATION AVOIDANCE AGREEMENT (DTAA) WITH MAURITIUS

- **India-Mauritius Tax Treaty To Incorporate 'Principal Purpose Test' (PPT)**
- **PPT To Determine If Primary Purpose Of Tax Arrangement Was To Obtain Treaty Benefit**
- **Treaty Benefit May Be Denied To Transactions That Fail PPT**

The amended pact includes the Principal Purpose Test (PPT), which is in line with the global efforts against treaty abuse. The PPT essentially implies that the tax benefits under the treaty will not be applicable if it is established that obtaining that duty benefit was the principal purpose of any transaction or arrangement.

The recent amendment reflects India's intent to align with global efforts against treaty abuse, under the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) framework — an international framework to combat tax avoidance by multinational enterprises using base erosion and profit shifting tools i.e "shifting" profits from higher tax to lower tax jurisdictions. Though India is yet to make any announcements regarding Pillar Two amendments (a minimum 15% corporate tax on income) in its domestic tax laws, experts said it is anticipated this may be announced in the July 2024 budget, after the general elections.

Impact of the amended treaty

Investors are apprehensive that this will result in greater scrutiny of the capital gains tax levy and exemption, as the PPT will be applicable to past investments where investors have not made an exit yet.

The DTAA was a major reason for a large number of FPIs and foreign entities to route their investments in India through Mauritius, as there was no capital gains tax on sale/transfer of shares.

Mauritius remains India's fourth largest source of FPI investments, after the US, Singapore, and Luxembourg. FPI investment from Mauritius stood at Rs 4.19 lakh crore at the end of March 2024, which is 6 per cent of the total FPI investment of Rs 69.54 lakh crore in India.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

3. Swiss women win landmark climate change case: Why is it significant?

Why in News?

ELDERLY SWISS WOMEN WIN 'HISTORIC' CLIMATE CASE



Recently, Europe's highest human rights court sided with a group of 2,000 Swiss women — all over the age of 64 — who had sued their government for violating their human rights by failing to do enough to combat the adverse effects of climate change.

The landmark ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) could influence how courts across Europe and beyond deal with the cases in which petitioners argue that climate change involves human rights violations. It could also embolden more communities to sue their governments for not taking adequate steps to mitigate the effects of climate change. Notably, the verdict has come just days after the Supreme Court of India expanded the scope of Articles 14 (right to equality) and 21 (protection of life and personal liberty), saying people have a "right to be free from the adverse effects of climate change".

What was the case?

The case was brought against Switzerland by Klima Seniorinnen Schweiz (Association of Senior Women for Climate Protection Switzerland), a group of women climate activists all above the age of 64, in November 2016. The women claimed that the Swiss government's inadequate climate policies violate their right to life and other guarantees under the European Convention on Human Rights. The convention is an international agreement to protect human rights and political freedoms in Europe.

The petitioners built their case by partly relying on their medical vulnerability as senior citizens to extreme heat caused by climate change. They cited the reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) — a United Nations body which assesses the science related to climate change.

The reports "show that the Swiss population of senior women — especially those over 75 — are more prone to heat-related medical problems like 'dehydration, hyperthermia, fatigue, loss of consciousness, heat cramps and heat strokes'. As a result, the case was filed only by senior women, although they acknowledged that older men, people with diseases, and small children also suffer from heat waves and other climate effects.

What did the court say?

The ECHR noted that Article 8 of the convention, "encompasses a right for individuals to effective protection by the state authorities from the serious adverse effects of climate change on their lives, health, well-being and quality of life."

The Swiss government, however, violated the law as it not only did not enact adequate laws to combat climate change impacts but also failed to meet greenhouse gas (GHG) emission goals, according to the court.

Why is the ruling significant?

The Swiss government is now obliged to update its climate change policies but the ECHR cannot tell authorities what kind of policies to implement.

Nonetheless, the judgment could have far-reaching implications. The ECHR's verdict is applicable in 46 member states, including all the European Union (EU), plus the United Kingdom (UK) and various other non-EU countries. This means that any climate and human

rights case brought before a judge in Europe's national courts will now have to consider ECHR's judgment in whatever decision they make. It may also encourage citizens and communities to file similar cases in countries that are party to the European Convention on Human Rights.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: Indian Express

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