Prelim Bits 11-12-2019

GCC Summit

- Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) 40th summit was recently held in Riyadh, for second year in a row.
- It is a regional political and economic alliance of six Gulf States i.e Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.
- HQ - Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
- Its aim is to achieve ever closer union between the energy rich Gulf countries.
- In the recent summit, Saudi Arabia's King Salman called for regional unity to confront Iran and secure energy supplies and maritime channels.
- **Qatar and GCC -** Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and non-GCC member Egypt imposed a political and economic boycott of Qatar in June 2017 over allegations that Doha backs terrorism.
- Kuwait and the United States have tried to mediate the rift.
- After 2 years of strained relationship, Qatar's Prime Minister has attended the recent meeting which is the sign of thaw in a regional dispute.
- PM is the most senior Qatari to attend the annual gathering since 2017, follows an intensification of efforts to resolve the Gulf dispute.

Climate Change Performance Index

- It is an annual publication by Environment think tank German Watch, the New Climate Institute and the Climate Action Network since 2005.
- The index tracks countries' efforts to combat climate change.
- It is an independent monitoring tool aims to enhance transparency in international climate politics.
- It evaluates and compares the climate protection performance of 57 countries and the EU, which are together responsible for more than 90% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- 80% of the evaluation is based on objective indicators of emissions trend and emissions level.
- 20% of the index results are built upon national and international climate policy assessments by more than 200 experts from the respective countries.
- Country's ranking is defined by 14 indicators within 4 categories – GHG Emissions, Renewable Energy, Energy Use and Climate Policy.

- The CCPI ranking is qualified in relative terms (better–worse) rather than in absolute terms.
- In CCPI 2020, no country performs well enough in all index categories to achieve an overall very high rating in the index, thus the first 3 ranks remain empty.
- Sweden leads the ranking on rank 4, followed by Denmark and Morocco.
- The bottom 3 countries are Taiwan, Saudi Arabia and United States.
- **India**, for the first time, ranks at 9 among the top 10 in the index.

Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights Authority (PPV&FRA)

- The Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers Rights (PPV&FR) act has been enacted in India in 2001.
- PPV&FRA was created as a statutory body under the Ministry of Agriculture through this act.
- The primary objective is to provide an effective system for protection of plant varieties, the rights of farmers and plant breeders.
- It allows a farmer to save, use, sow, resow, exchange, share or sell his farm produce including seed of a variety protected under this Act.
- The act was enacted to give effect to the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of the Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), to which India is a member.
- **Recent Issue –** There is a case ongoing between PepsiCo and farmers over alleged cultivation of variety of potatoes.
- PepsiCo introduced a particular variety of Potato to India in 2009 and registered it under the PPV&FR Act in 2016.
- It sells seeds to 12,000 farmers under a collaborative farmers programme and has an exclusive contract to buy back their produce to make its chips.
- The company filed a lawsuit against 4 farmers for allegedly growing potato which is exclusively registered by the company.
- However, after major protests and boycotts, it withdrew all cases.
- In June 2019, activists applied for the revocation of PepsiCo's registration at the Authority on the grounds that it was not in public interest, especially given the company's lawsuits against farmers.
- In response to the revocation notice, PepsiCo claimed that it had rights under the PPV&FR act to pursue necessary action against individuals who infringe its rights.

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Google and Defamation Cases

- Supreme Court has ruled that Internet intermediaries cannot be protected

from criminal defamation cases registered against them prior to October 27, 2009.

- It was only on October 27, 2009 that Parliament amended the Section 79 of Information Technology Act of 2000.
- By this amendment, it makes intermediary not liable for any third party information, data or communication link made available or hosted by them.
- It aims to protect online intermediaries from liability for criminally defamatory content published in them by third parties.
- It gave almost blanket protection to intermediaries from legal action under Section 499/500 (criminal defamation) of the Indian Penal Code.
- The recent judgement was issued on the basis of an appeal filed by Google India Pvt Ltd against a criminal defamation case filed by M/s Vishaka Industries, a manufacturer of asbestos cement sheets.
- Vishaka accused the co-ordinator of a Google group called 'Ban Asbestos India' and Google India for authoring/hosting defamatory articles against their products in 2008.
- The accused were asked to appear in court in September 2009, that is before the amendment in Section 79 came into existence.
- Google India argued that its role is passive and not a publisher of third-party content.
- The government too agreed with Google India. The government had said that its powers to block online information does not expand to blocking any case of defamation, contempt of court, etc.

Source: The Hindu

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