**Current Affairs : 21 May 2022**

**TALKING PEACE, NEGOTIATING WITH THE MAOISTS**

* Recently, the Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh, Bhupesh Baghel during his State­wide tour, announced that the State government was ready for peace talks with the Maoists provided they laid down arms and expressed their faith in the Constitution of India.
* In its response, the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DKSZC) of the CPI (Maoist) alleged that the offer as dodgy.

**Maoists condition for peace talks**

The **three major conditions** the Maoists want to include are as follows:



As the state government didn’t bring any change in its earlier stand, there has been no progress.

**SAMADHAN doctrine**

It was rolled out by Union Government in 2019 to tackle left-wing extremism in India. It encompasses the entire strategy of government from short-term policy to long-term policy formulated at different levels. **SAMADHAN** stands for

* S- Smart Leadership,
* A- Aggressive Strategy,
* M- Motivation and Training,
* A- Actionable Intelligence,
* D- Dashboard Based KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) and KRAs (Key Result Areas),
* H- Harnessing Technology,
* A- Action plan for each Theatre,
* N- No access to Financing

**NORMS EASED FOR GM CROP RESEARCH**

* The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) has issued guidelines easing norms for research into genetically modified (GM) crops and circumventing challenges of using foreign genes to change crops profile.

**What is Genome Editing?**

* Genome is the complete genetic information of an organism and genome editing is a type of genetic engineering in which DNA is inserted, deleted, modified or replaced in the genome of a living organism.
* The applications of genome editing technology include crop improvement, enhancement of crop nutrition, crop protection, biofuels, pharmaceuticals, and other high-value secondary metabolites & nutraceuticals.

**Functions of Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC):**

* The GEAC functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).
* As per Rules, 1989, it is responsible for appraisal of activities involving large scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from the environmental angle.
* The committee is also responsible for appraisal of proposals relating to release of genetically engineered organisms and products into the environment including experimental field trials.
* The committee or any persons authorized by it has powers to take punitive action under the Environment Protection Act.

**Composition:**

* The committee is chaired by the Special Secretary/Additional Secretary of the MoEF&CC.
* Members of the committee are representatives of the concerned agencies and departments, namely, Ministry of Industrial Development, Department of Biotechnology and the Department of Atomic Energy.

**Major Highlights:**

* Under the new guidelines, the **researchers**who use **gene-editing technology** to modify the genome of the plant are **exempt** from seeking approvals from the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC).
* The guidelines provide a roadmap for the development and sustainable use of GE technologies for plants in India, specifying the biosafety concerns, and describing the regulatory pathways to be adopted while undertaking GE of plants.

**29 PHONES TESTED FOR PEGASUS SPYWARE: SC**

* The Supreme Court has granted additional time of four weeks, until June 20, to the three-member expert committee constituted to look into the Pegasus row.
* It said that 29 infected mobile phones are being examined for the spyware by the technical committee and the process should conclude in four weeks.

**About Pegasus Spyware**

* Pegasus is a malware/spyware developed by Israel’s NSO Group.
* The spyware suite is designed to access any smartphone through **zero-click** vulnerabilities remotely.
* Once a phone is infiltrated, the spyware can access entire data on that particular phone.
* It also has real-time access to emails, texts, phone calls, as well as the camera and sound recording capabilities of the smartphone.

**Snooping Row**

* A global collaborative investigative project has discovered that Israeli spyware Pegasus was used to target thousands of people across the world.
* In India, at least 300 people are believed to have been targeted, including two serving Ministers in the current government, three Opposition leaders, one constitutional authority, several journalists and business persons.
* Allegations of snooping using military-grade spyware Pegasus prevented Parliament from functioning normally in August 2021.
* The Central Government had refused to disclose whether it had used Pegasus spyware by stating that it was a national security issue.

**Involvement of Supreme Court**

* The Pegasus row also reached the SC when the Editors Guild of India filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking direction for a probe by a special investigation team.
* In a judgment, the SC bench led by CJI NV Ramana stated that national security ground raised by the State cannot totally exclude judicial review.
* Rejecting the Centre's defence, the Court said that mere invocation of national security can't give the State a free pass.

**Key Highlights**

* **Technical committee has submitted its interim report**
	+ The interim report sought an extension of time till June 20, 2022 to complete the entire exercise and file a comprehensive report before the Supreme Court.
* **Standard operating procedure for testing the ‘infected devices’ will be finalised**
	+ SC said that the standard operating procedure for testing the infected devices will be finalised too.
* **Twenty-nine mobile devices are being examined**
	+ The apex court said that twenty-nine mobile devices are being examined.
	+ Once the technical committee submits a report to the supervisory judge, the judge will also add his comments.

**WORLD BEE DAY**

**This year, World Bee Day is being celebrated under the theme - ‘Bee Engaged: Celebrating the diversity of bees and beekeeping systems’.**



* World Bee Day is celebrated on May 20.
* On this day Anton Janša, the pioneer of beekeeping, was born in 1734.
* The purpose of the international day is to acknowledge the role of bees and other pollinators for the ecosystem.
* The UN Member States approved Slovenia’s proposal to proclaim 20 May as World Bee Day in December 2017.

**Beekeeping in India**

* The centrally funded scheme, ‘National Beekeeping and Honey Mission’ aims to establish 5 big regional and 100 small honey and other Bee Products testing laboratories, out of which 3 world class state-of-the-art laboratories have been setup.
* The Government of India is also providing assistance for setting up of Processing Units.
* More than 1.25 lakh metric tonnes of honey is being produced in the country, out of which more than 60 thousand metric tonnes of natural honey is exported.

**SRI LANKA GOES BANKRUPT**

**Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has declared the country bankrupt as it faces a fuel crisis and food shortages.**



* Mr Wickremesinghe said, the last administration is to blame for the country has come to a point where it is bankrupt which has never happened before.
* We have no dollars, we have no rupees, we are not in a stable position, we are feeling the rise of the price of fuel, and we know it will go higher, he added.
* Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's central bank has secured foreign exchange to pay for fuel and cooking gas shipments that will ease crippling shortages.
* Most of Sri Lanka's petrol stations have run dry as the island nation battles its most devastating economic crisis since independence in 1948.

**‘TOUR OF DUTY’ RECRUITMENT IN ARMY**

**A first-of-its-kind model, Tour of Duty (ToD), for short term recruitment of jawans into the three Services of the armed forces for a period of four years is all set to be rolled out soon.**

* All recruitment in the three services will be through ToD route only. The four year stint will include six months of training and three-and-a-half-years’ service. Army recruitment rallies have been on hold for over two years now due to the COVID-induced pandemic.
* Those recruited under ToD would get salary and benefits almost at par with regular personnel and there will be a severance package of around 10-12 lakhs after four years.
* This move is expected to bring significant reduction in pay and pensions and frees up funds for modernisation especially for the Army, which has negatively skewed revenue to capital ratio in the budgetary allocation.