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CURRENT AFFAIRS



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Right to life must override religious sentiments: SC

Context:

1. The Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) issued an order that no celebrations, processions and gatherings would be allowed during the upcoming Kanwar Yatra in the Capital.
2. Earlier, the state government of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh has also cancelled the Kanwar Yatra
3. It was on the backdrop of Supreme Court judgement in which it said , "Health of the citizenry of India and the right to life are paramount. All other sentiments, albeit religious, are subservient to this basic fundamental right"

Kanwar Yatra

1. It is an annual pilgrimage of devotees of Shiva
2. The devotees visit Hindu pilgrimage places of Haridwar, Gaumukh and Gangotri in Uttarakhand and Sultanganj in Bihar to fetch holy waters of Ganges River
3. Kanwar Yatra is named after the kanwar, a single pole (usually made of bamboo) with two roughly equal loads fastened or dangling from opposite ends.
4. The kanwar is carried by balancing the middle of the pole on one or both shoulders.

Concerns:

1. Risk to public health during massive religious gatherings in the midst of a pandemic
2. large gatherings posed a major risk, amidst fears and expectations of a third wave.
3. Right to life

Learnings:

1. The pandharpur yatra in Maharashtra in which every year lakhs of warkaris participate is performed by few warkaris carrying Padukas (footprints) in a vehicle on the same route as maintained by the warkaris
2. This practice can be one of the solution which can be applied to other such yatra giving priority to right to life over religious sentiments

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Pegasus spyware

Context

Indian politicians and journalists on targets of surveillance operations carried out with the help of Pegasus spyware

More about it:

1. French newspaper Le Monde reported that several Delhi-based diplomats were also on the list of potential targets for phone hacking from 2017-2021, along with a phone associated with Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan.
2. The telephone numbers of a British High Commission official and two officials of the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and employees of international NGOs like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation were also in the database of those targeted.

In the Past:

1. In May 2019, WhatsApp identified that a bug in the app's call function was used to install a malicious code into users' phones.
2. On October 29, it identified the malicious code as Pegasus, a spyware developed by an Israeli company, NSO. WhatsApp and its parent company Facebook have sued NSO in a U.S. court

What is Pegasus?

1. Pegasus is spyware developed by the Israeli cyber arms firm NSO Group that can be covertly installed on mobile phones (and other devices) running most versions of iOS and Android

The Method:

1. The code is transmitted by calling the target phone on WhatsApp. The code enters the phone even if the call is not answered.
2. The log of that call gets erased

3. Once installed, Pegasus can send the target's contacts, calendar events, phone calls on and messages on communication apps like WhatsApp and Telegram to the spyware's controller.
4. It could steal messages from even services that offer encryption because it was taking the messages before the encryption process, according to anti-malware service Kaspersky.
5. The controller can also turn the phone into a spying device by switching on its camera or microphone.

The Targets:

1. Human-rights activists, lawyers, and journalists were targeted across the globe. This included several lawyers and journalists in India.
2. Apple's iOS security update 9.3.5 take care of the vulnerability exploited by Pegasus.
3. Google identified infected Android phones and disable the malware and informs the targets.