Centre on GM mustard crop

Why in news?

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Indian government don’t have any policy decision on the commercial release of Genetically Modified (GM) mustard crop.

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Why GM mustard is opposed?

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- Hybrids are normally obtained by crossing two genetically diverse plants from the same species, but there is no natural hybridisation system in mustard.
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- The new technology for GM mustard has used a “Barnase” gene isolated from a soil bacterium.
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- The resultant hybrid mustard plant will be high-yielding.
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- This incorporation of alien genes led to the opposition.
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- This same technology has been used in GM cotton.
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- The opponents of GM mustard point out that cotton is not a food crop, while mustard is India’s largest edible oil-yielding crop.
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What is the status of its commercial release?

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- The apex court had on October 17 last year gave the stay on the commercial release of GM mustard crop until further orders.
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- The court had asked the Centre to seek public opinion on such seeds before releasing it for cultivation purposes, even as government approval is awaited.
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- Recently, the Union government informed the Supreme Court that it has no policy decisions on GM mustard.
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Why SC demands for a well-informed view on GM mustard?

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- Mustard is one of India’s most important winter crops, which is sown between mid-October and late-November.
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- The government sowing the seeds in various fields and the bio-safety dossier has to be put on the website, which has not been done yet.
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- The field trials were being carried out by the government without conducting the relevant tests.
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- The contamination of germ plasm will happen with mustard HT (Herbicide Tolerant) DMH 11, it will be irremediable and irreversible making our food toxic at the molecular level without recourse.
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- A Technical Expert Committee (TEC) report has pointed out that the entire regulatory system on GM mustard is a messes and a 10-year suspension should be given.
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Quick fact

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Genetic engineering appraisal committee (GEAC)

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- It is established under Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change.
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- It is the apex body for approval of activities involving large scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants.
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- It is also responsible for approval of proposals relating to release of genetically engineered organisms and products including experimental field trials.
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Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants (CGMCP)

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- It is a R&D setup of Delhi University.
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- It takes important researches on bio technology.
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- This centre developed many indigenous genetically modified seeds.
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Source: Business Line

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