Origin and spread of SARS-CoV-2

Why in news?

Recently scientists dismissed the lab-origin theory of SARS-CoV-2 virus.

What does the study say about virus origination?

- A study by 17-member WHO team have put to rest the lab-origin conspiracy theories which emerged early during the pandemic.
- Based on the analysis of genome sequence of virus they concluded that the virus like other like pathogens originated in wildlife.
- They reported that there is no sign of direct human influence & virus origin from laboratory in Wuhan is extremely unlikely.
- They suggest that virus may originated from a natural reservoir of bats which is unlikely to have been in Wuhan but miles away from any natural bat habitat.

When did it spread?

- In their initial investigation, they suggest that virus transmission directly from bats to humans is highly unlikely & there must be an intermediary host species which they could not confirm.
- It was found that virus was circulating in Wuhan before it was identified but there is no evidence of large outbreaks in Wuhan prior to December 2019.
- In the report of The New England Journal of Medicine, scientists found evidence of human-to-human transmission as early as mid-December 2019.
- This suggests that virus circulated weeks before it was identified in Wuhan but China officially confirmed human-to-human transmission only in mid-January.

What does the study say?

- They did not rule out the possibility of transmission of virus via frozen food but they mention that possibility of such a route appears unlikely.
- This is because the instances of live viruses on packaging are rare and isolated.
- Visit of WHO is just the beginning of a long endeavour to trace the origin of virus & will succeed only when scientific investigation is allowed to follow its

course without any political interference.

- China again failed to be truly transparent during the SARS-CoV-2 outbreak which earlier happened on SARS outbreak in the 2000s.
- It should be now more open and cooperative so that future outbreaks of related corona viruses can be identified and contained early, if not prevented.

Source: The Hindu

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