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Likelihood of Future Pandemics Report

- Recently IPBES has released a report on future pandemics.
- The report has warned that future pandemics will emerge more often, they'll spread more rapidly, do more damage to the world and kill more people than COVID-19, unless significant measures are taken.
- Key Findings of the report are as follows

1. COVID-19 is at least the sixth pandemic to have taken place in the last century since the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918.
2. Three of the pandemics were caused by influenza viruses, one by HIV followed by SARS and COVID-19.
3. Almost all the pandemics so far, have been zoonoses (diseases caused by germs that spread between animals and people).
4. While the current pandemic's origins lie in microbes carried by animals, "like all pandemics, its emergence has been entirely driven by human activities.
5. More than 70% of emerging diseases, such as Ebola, Zika and Nipah, are caused by microbes found in animals which spread due to contact among wildlife, livestock and people.
6. About 30% of emerging infectious diseases are attributed to land-use change, agricultural expansion and urbanisation.
7. There are over 1.7 million currently 'undiscovered' viruses that exist in mammals and birds, out of which up to 827,000 could have the ability to infect people.

- **Suggestions from the report -** Pandemic risk can be lowered by reducing the human activities that drive loss of biodiversity.

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem (IPBES)

- It is an intergovernmental organization established to improve the interface between science and policy on issues of biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- In 2012 IPBES was established by the United Nations, but functions

independently, HQ in Bonn, Germany.

Pandemic vs Epidemic

- **Pandemic -** According to the WHO, a pandemic is declared when a new disease for which people do not have immunity spreads around the world beyond expectations.
- **Epidemic -** An epidemic is a large outbreak, one that spreads among a population or region.
- It is less severe than pandemic due to a limited area of spread.

Maintenance to Estranged Wife

- The Supreme Court ruled that Computation of maintenance to estranged wife will include child care.
- Normally, the courts take into account the husband's income and assets while quantifying interim maintenance to an estranged wife.
- Recently SC noted that with advancement of age, it would be difficult for a dependent wife to get an easy entry into the workforce after a break of several years.
- **Interim Maintenance:** Hindu Marriage Act nor the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act specified the date from which interim maintenance was to be granted, leading to exercise of discretion by family courts.
- Recently SC said interim maintenance had to be granted from the day the estranged woman filed an application in court.
- **Computing the maintenance:** The SC said the family court must also take into consideration the educational expenses of children staying with the estranged wife in computing maintenance as "*education expenses of the children must be normally borne by the father*".
- This is the first time that the highest court has considered the sacrifices made by career women in taking care of children.
- The SC ruled that this would be an added component for enhancing the grant of interim compensation to her, so that she could lead a life almost akin to what she was used to when all was well in the matrimonial home.
- **Penalty for non-Payment:** The SC also said non-payment of maintenance could lead to arrest and detention of the delinquent husband and may even lead to confiscation of his assets and their auction to make good the dues to the estranged wife.

Luhri Stage-I Hydro Electric Project

- It is located on River Satluj in Shimla and Kullu districts of Himachal Pradesh.
- This project will generate 758.20 million units of electricity annually, which will help in providing grid stability and improve the power supply position.
- Besides adding valuable renewable energy to the grid, the project would also lead to a reduction of 6.1 lakh tons of carbon dioxide from the environment annually, thus contributing to an improvement in air quality and less air pollution.
- Himachal Pradesh will benefit with free power worth around Rs. 1140 crore, during the Project Life Cycle of 40 years.
- The project affected families will be provided with 100 units of free electricity per month for ten years.
- It is being implemented by Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (SJVNL) on Build-Own-Operate-Maintain (BOOM) basis with active support from Government of India and the State Government.
- Recently Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the investment for 210 MW Luhri Stage-I Hydro Electric Project.

National Monsoon Mission

- National Monsson Mission was launched by the Ministry of Earth Sciences in 2012.
- It aims to improve the forecasting skills by setting up a state-of-the-art dynamic prediction system for monsoon rainfall different time scales.
- NMM builds a working partnership between the academic and research and development (R&D) organisations, both national and international.
- Its augmentation with the HPC facilities has helped the country in achieving a paradigm shift in weather and climate modelling for operational weather forecasts.
- Recently, the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) has evaluated the economic benefits of the National Monsoon Mission (NMM).
- The study refers to economic benefits as direct monetary gains to crop farmers, livestock rearers, and fishermen in the country.
- The benefits are from accurate weather forecasting by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and other agencies working under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- Few of such benefits are as follows

1. Agro-meteorological services for farmers is one of the most prominent

weather services of IMD.
2. Every day Ocean State Forecast (OSF) and warnings to fishermen going out to the sea by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) helped in elimination of less or not so productive trips to the ocean.
3. Potential Fishing Zone (PFZ) advisories resulted in successful trips generating additional catches.

Char-Chaporis Island and Miya Muslims

- Char-chaporis are shifting riverine islands of the Brahmaputra.
- A char is a floating island while chaporis are low-lying flood-prone riverbanks.
- These islands are primarily inhabited by the Muslims of Bengali-origin.
- They are derogatively referred to as 'Miyas'.
- The 'Miya' community comprises descendants of Muslim migrants from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) to Assam.
- The community migrated in several waves starting with the British annexation of Assam in 1826, and continuing into Partition and the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War.
- It has resulted in changes in demographic composition of the region.
- According to official data the population of chars at 24.90 lakh as per a socio-economic survey in 2002-03.
- While Bengali-origin Muslims primarily occupy these islands, other communities such as Misings, Deoris, Kocharis, Nepalis also live in the island.

Source: PIB, Indian Express, the Hindu, Times of India

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