

8. Corona Virus (Wuhan Virus)

Prelims Level: Medicine and Pharmaceuticals

Mains Level: GS-III Awareness in the Field of IT, Computers, Robotics, Nano – Technology, Bio-technology and Issues relating to Intellectual Property rights.

Why in News?

- Chinese scientists have confirmed can spread between human beings.

Corona Virus:

- Corona viruses are large family of viruses, which cause illnesses to people and also circulate in animals including camels, cats and bats.
- They cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome.
- 2019-nCoV is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.
- Much remains to be understood about the new coronavirus, which was first identified in China earlier this month.
- Not enough is known about 2019-nCoV to draw definitive conclusions about how it is transmitted, clinical features of disease, or the extent to which it has spread. The source also remains unknown.

Wuhan Virus:

- The first cases emerged in Wuhan in central China's Hubei province.
- On December 31 last year, authorities confirmed that a large number of patients with unexplained pneumonia were admitted in hospitals in the city.

Symptoms of Infection:

- According to the WHO, common signs include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Serious infections can lead to pneumonia, kidney failure, and death.
- Although human-to-human transmission has now been confirmed, the WHO says animals are the outbreak's likely primary source. It is not known yet which animals are responsible.
- To prevent the spread of all respiratory infections, the WHO in general asks people to cover their mouths and noses when coughing or sneezing, and to frequently wash their hands.
- Direct contact with farm or wild animals should be avoided — similar outbreaks in the past, like the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) emerged from markets where people were in contact with live animals.

Pandemic Concerns:

- People see a similarity with the SARS outbreak that infected over 8,000 people and killed around 775 in more than 35 countries worldwide in 2002-03.
- SARS too, was caused by a mystery coronavirus, and started in China.
- The source of the virus remained unknown for 15 years, until Chinese scientists in 2017 traced it back to a colony of horseshoe bats living in remote cave in Yunnan province.
- The virus was carried by civet cats which are sold in markets in China.
- Fears that SARS could reappear and memories of China misleading the rest of the world on the extent and seriousness of the outbreak have not gone away.

