

2. Study on Bats and Bat-Hunters of Nagaland comes Under Scanner

Prelims level: Science and Technology – Pharmaceuticals.

Mains Level: GS-II Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Why in News?

- A research has been carried out by researchers from U.S, China on bats and humans (bat-hunters) of the Nagaland state.
- As a follow-up, Indian government has formed an inquiry committee consisting of members from ICMR to investigate the results of the study. Recently, the enquiry committee has also submitted its report to the Health ministry.

Key Findings of the Report:

- The study suggests that bats in South Asia act as a reservoir host of a diverse range of filoviruses, and “filovirus spill-over” occurs mainly through human exposure to these bats.
- The researchers have found the presence of filovirus (e.g. Ebola virus) reactive antibodies in both human and bat populations in northeast India, a region with no historical record of Ebola virus.
- The study says the potential virus present in the bats may not be an exact copy of the virus responsible for various outbreaks.

Significance of the Study:

- Bats often carry ebola, rabies, marburg and the SARS coronavirus. Many high-profile epidemics have been traced to bats, and scientists are discovering new bat-borne viruses all the time.
- Ebola and Marburg viruses are known to cause severe haemorrhagic fevers, which affect many organs and damage the blood vessels, killing more than 50 percent of the people they infect.
- In such a scenario, it is more important to know about the source of such diseases and its impact on humans.
- Research on tribals and their relations with such disease carrying animals, will help the researchers to learn about their resistance and antibody characteristics. This knowledge will become handy in developing new medicines, in case of massive outbreaks.

Recent Issue:

- The government has decided to order an inquiry on the study, since it has to be known that how the **Foreign Researchers** were allowed to access live samples of bats and bat hunters (humans) without due permissions from Concerned Authorities.

