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Push for Probe into Covid-19 Origin

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Why in News

Recently, **India joined 61 countries** that have moved a proposal at the **World Health Assembly** to **identify the zoonotic source** of the coronavirus.

- The World Health Assembly is the **decision making body of the World Health Organisation (WHO)**.
- **Zoonotic** refers to diseases that can be passed from animals to humans.

Key Points

- **The Proposal:**
 - It is a part of a **seven-page draft resolution moved by 35 countries** and the **27-member European Union**.
 - It asks the WHO chief to work with the **World Organisation for Animal Health** to conduct **scientific and collaborative field missions** and the **route of introduction to the human population (novel coronavirus)**, including the **possible role of intermediate hosts**.
 - The countries also demanded an **“impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation”** of the World Health Organization's (WHO) response to **Covid-19**.
Earlier, the WHO was slammed for accepting the findings given by China on face-value. The **US has even suspended funding to the body**.
- **Signatories of the Proposal:**
 - The resolution is supported by **three of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council — UK, Russia and France** — along with Japan, Australia, South Korea, New Zealand, South Africa and Turkey.
 - From the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** nations, **only India, Bangladesh and Bhutan** have signed up.

- **India's stand:**

- This is the first time **India** has taken a position in an international forum on the origin of the virus and the need for an independent evaluation of WHO's response to the crisis.
- Earlier, India had maintained that it is engaged in the fight against Covid-19, and will revisit the issue after the crisis is over.

But Prime Minister Modi did indicate India's stand at the G20 summit in March where he backed WHO reform and referred to the need for transparency and accountability.

- The virus has cost loss of livelihoods, poverty increase and economic crisis in each sector of India.

- **Role of China and its Response:**

- The virus is widely believed to have originated from China's Wuhan, where the first case of Covid-19 was reported.
- China is **accused of concealing crucial information** in relation to its spread and clinical diagnosis.
- China had stated in its defence that it may support a review **"at an appropriate time"**, but criticised the **politicisation of the virus's origin** by the US and some other countries, and an inquiry **"based on the presumption of guilt"**.

It said that Wuhan city has first reported Covid-19 cases, but that does not mean the virus originated in Wuhan.

Source:IE