

**SAFE FORESTS, SAFE PEOPLE: ON DISEASES OF ANIMAL ORIGIN****Destruction of forests sends wild animals, and the deadly viruses they carry, closer to humans**

The rapid spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus across the world has focused attention on the seemingly invisible processes that help pathogens originally found in wild animals make the leap to humans. Diseases of animal origin such as Ebola, HIV, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, bird flu and swine flu have raised alarm over potential pandemics in recent years, and the COVID-19 pandemic has confirmed the worst fears of scientists. The contagion, thought to have originated in a wet market that kept live animals in Wuhan, China, points to many underlying factors: the destruction of forests and trapping or farming of wild species has brought these animals closer to humans, and the viruses they harbour find ready hosts in domestic animals, moving to humans. There is concern also about rising economic activity, such as road building and mining cutting through forests, bringing more people in close contact with animals. Another dimension is the global trade in wild species — in Wuhan, they reportedly ranged from wolf pups to rats, civets and foxes, among others — and their sale in markets along with domestic animals. The well-documented histories of the lethal Nipah and Hendra viruses, involving transfer from bats to pigs in the former, and bats to horses in the latter, underscore the value of maintaining viable ecosystems, and eliminating the need for wild bats to colonise human surroundings.

Biodiversity in forests harmlessly retains dangerous viruses and other pathogens among a vast pool of wild animals, away from people. What this phenomenon makes clear is that governments should stop viewing undisturbed landscapes as an impediment to economic growth. As COVID-19 has proved, these short-term high growth trajectories can come to an abrupt halt with a pandemic. Such a terrible outcome could be witnessed again, potentially caused by reckless exploitation of the environment. In spite of repeated warnings of crippling pandemics waiting in the wings, governments paid little attention. Now, a novel virus that can move effortlessly from human to human has found a large reservoir of hosts in a globalised world. Unlike previous epidemics, the latest one has extracted a staggering toll, killing people, forcing a lockdown and causing economic devastation. This should serve as a dire warning to the government that hasty permissions granted for new roads, dams, mines and power projects in already enfeebled forests can unleash more scourges. It would do well to roll back its dilution of the environmental clearance system, strengthen it with a mandate to the States, and leave protected areas to scientific experts. There is mounting evidence that environmental protection confers health protection. Pristine forests with diverse species keep viruses virtually bottled up, out of man's way. They should be left undisturbed.

**Meanings of Difficult Words:**

- ❖ **deadly** (adverb) – fatal, lethal, life-threatening.
- ❖ **novel coronavirus** (nCoV) (SARS-CoV-2) (noun) – a new strain (type/variety) coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans.
- ❖ **seemingly** (adverb) – apparently, allegedly, supposedly, evidently, reportedly.
- ❖ **invisible** (adjective) – unnoticeable, indistinguishable, indiscernible.
- ❖ **pathogen** (noun) – bacteria/virus that causes disease.
- ❖ **leap** (noun) - a sudden/quick jump; change, move.
- ❖ **Ebola** (noun) – Ebola virus disease (EVD), formerly known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever, is a rare but severe, often fatal illness in humans. The virus is transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads in the human population through human-to-human transmission.

- ❖ **severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)** (noun) – SARS coronavirus (SARS-CoV) is thought to be an animal virus from an asyet-uncertain animal reservoir, perhaps bats, that spread to other animals (civet cats). It is a viral (human-to-human transmission) that can cause severe respiratory illness or death.
- ❖ **bird flu** (noun) – it is also known as influenza A or the avian flu. It primarily infects birds, but can pose health risks to people.
- ❖ **swine flu** (noun) – H1N1 flu; Swine influenza/flu is a highly contagious disease caused by a strain (type) of the influenza type A virus called H1N1. Swine flu used to only affect pigs and rarely, be passed to humans.
- ❖ **alarm** (noun) – warning sound, danger/distress signal, alert.
- ❖ **pandemic** (noun) – the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
- ❖ **COVID-19** (noun) – coronavirus disease 2019.
- ❖ **contagion** (noun) – the spreading of a dangerous disease.
- ❖ **point to** (verb) – indicate, suggest, denote.
- ❖ **underlying** (adjective) – fundamental, basic, primary.
- ❖ **trapping** (noun) – confining, catching, cornering (animals with a trap).
- ❖ **species** (noun) – a group/breed/family of living organisms (animals & plants) with the individual having the same quality & can breed.
- ❖ **host** (noun) – an animal/plant on which a parasite or commensal organism lives.
- ❖ **dimension** (noun) – aspect, feature, element.
- ❖ **pup** (noun) - a young (wolf).
- ❖ **civet** (noun) - a small cat-like mammal.
- ❖ **Nipah virus** (noun) – a zoonotic virus (it is transmitted from animals to humans) and can also be transmitted through contaminated food or directly between people.
- ❖ **Hendra virus** (noun) - a rare emerging zoonosis (zoonosis means a disease that can be transmitted to humans from animals) that causes severe and often fatal disease in both infected horses and humans.
- ❖ **underscore** (verb) – underline, emphasize, highlight.
- ❖ **viable** (adjective) – manageable, feasible, effective.
- ❖ **ecosystem** (noun) – living things and their environment.
- ❖ **colonize** (verb) - settle in, populate; occupy, take over.
- ❖ **biodiversity** (noun) – the existence of a number and variety of species (plants & animals) in a particular geographic region/environment.
- ❖ **pool** (noun) – a group of something (kept as a reserve/stock).
- ❖ **phenomenon** (noun) – occurrence, event, happening.
- ❖ **impediment** (noun) – hindrance, obstacle, obstruction.
- ❖ **trajectory** (noun) – course, route, path.
- ❖ **come to an halt** (phrase) - to stop moving/working.
- ❖ **reckless** (adjective) – careless, thoughtless, incautious/heedless.
- ❖ **exploitation** (noun) – taking advantage, making use, misuse, ill/unfair treatment.
- ❖ **crippling** (adjective) - weakening, damaging, impairing, destroying, spoiling, paralyzing.
- ❖ **sit/wait in the wings** (phrase) – someone who is not active at this time, but ready to do something very soon.
- ❖ **pay attention** (phrase) – listen/heed, attend, concentrate on.

- ❖ **novel** (adjective) – new, different, unfamiliar/unusual.
- ❖ **reservoir** (noun) – source of something.
- ❖ **staggering** (adjective) – astonishing, shocking, surprising.
- ❖ **toll** (noun) – number, count, sum total (of deaths/casualties).
- ❖ **lockdown** (noun) – a state of isolation; confinement, restraint, encirclement.
- ❖ **devastation** (noun) – destruction, damage, havoc/wreckage.
- ❖ **dire** (adjective) – terrible, awful, distressing.
- ❖ **hasty** (adjective) – rash, reckless, impulsive.
- ❖ **enfeebled** (adjective) – weaken, debilitated, crippled, disabled.
- ❖ **unleash** (verb) – let loose, release, set free.
- ❖ **scourge** (noun) – plague, affliction, misfortune, suffering.
- ❖ **roll back** (phrasal verb) – reverse the progress of something.
- ❖ **dilution** (noun) – reduction in value/power/force of something.
- ❖ **mounting** (adjective) – increasing, growing, escalating.
- ❖ **confer** (verb) – grant, bestow, present/give.
- ❖ **pristine** (adjective) – pure, spotless, clean and fresh.
- ❖ **diverse** (adjective) - various, multiple, different.
- ❖ **virtually** (adverb) – effectively, nearly.
- ❖ **bottle up** (phrasal verb) - keep something contained; keep something trapped.
- ❖ **keep out of one's way** (phrase) - avoid, do not block or get involved in someone's route.

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### **BREAK FROM TRADITION: ON WIMBLEDON CANCELLATION**

**The cancellation of Wimbledon was inevitable, but fans and players will feel a void**

A yellow ball glides past the net, the players grunt, the grass twitches and under azure blue skies, the applause from the stands ranges from the muted to the ecstatic. Wimbledon is tennis at its best, and it remains the sport's holy grail, blending history and nostalgia with a massive global fan base. There are the other Grand Slam Opens — French, U.S. and Australian — but Wimbledon towers above all. Geographically fused to London, Wimbledon's appeal is truly universal. It is a feel-good genie let loose every year during the British summer, while cricket provides an echo from Lord's and other grounds across England. Last year, while Wimbledon uncorked its magic at The Championships as it is formally called, the cricket World Cup raced towards its climax. It was a sporting high and life was good. But since then, much water has flowed down the Thames and humankind is at another point, struggling to cope with the coronavirus pandemic that brooks no borders, weakening bodies and even pausing the most elementary of courtesies — the good old handshake, as social distancing is the preventive norm. When life is in peril, indulgences vanish, albeit for a while, and close on the heels of the postponement of the Tokyo Olympics to next year, Wimbledon too bit the dust. The announcement on Wednesday evoked one word from Roger Federer: "devastated!"

The denouement wasn't a surprise and this perhaps is the new-normal where what is often taken for granted can no longer be presumed permanent. Still, this is heartbreak for the die-hards, who will be forced to discard their annual rituals specific to Wimbledon. The debates, about who is greater among Martina Navratilova, Steffi Graf and Serena Williams or reliving the fabled rivalries: Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe; Stefan Edberg and Boris Becker; Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi; and the current one among Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, can wait. Wimbledon had even

elevated strawberries and cream into a rarefied zone and those pink-paper reports on how many kilograms were consumed near the courts, will also have to wait for another year. This might sound trivial, but to the centre court faithful, this was tradition not to be messed with, just like the all-white attire that players donned and the courtesy of taking a bow when royalty turned up in the audience. With the French Open rescheduled from May to September and the US Open authorities insisting that the event will stick to its August start, tennis fans have some room for hope. Still, Federer will be on the cusp of 40 when Wimbledon resumes next year and Serena would be 39. Will the legends last till then? Only time will tell.

### **Meanings of Difficult Words:**

- ❖ **inevitable** (adjective) – unavoidable, sure to happen, unpreventable.
- ❖ **void** (noun) – emptiness (due to the loss of something).
- ❖ **glide** (verb) - slide, move, flow smoothly.
- ❖ **grunt** (verb) - say something (unclear one); make some sound (inarticulate one).
- ❖ **twitch** (verb) - moving suddenly (without the ability to control).
- ❖ **azure** (adjective) - sky/deep blue.
- ❖ **applause** (noun) - clapping, praise, ovation.
- ❖ **ecstatic** (adjective) – delighted, thrilled, joyful.
- ❖ **at one's best** (phrase) – on top form, in great shape; peak, prime.
- ❖ **holy grail** (noun) – divine cup, treasure; (ambition, aspiration, hope, dream). Holy Grail is traditionally thought to be the cup that Jesus Christ drank from at the Last Supper.
- ❖ **nostalgia** (noun) – remembrance, recollection, sentimentality/wistfulness.
- ❖ **tower** (verb) - reach/stand high.
- ❖ **fuse** (verb) - combine, put together, blend/merge.
- ❖ **feel-good** (adjective) – relating to something causing well being/happiness.
- ❖ **genie** (noun) – a guardian, protective or magical spirit; an allpowerful spirit (a “jinni”) residing in a magical oil lamp of Aladdin.
- ❖ **let loose** (phrase) - unleash, release, set free.
- ❖ **echo** (noun) – trace/sign, indication, hint.
- ❖ **uncork** (verb) - deliver a throw, knock, hit/strike in a game/sport.
- ❖ **race** (verb) - run, have a race with (compete against).
- ❖ **humankind** (noun) - humanity, the human race, people.
- ❖ **coronavirus (CoV)**(noun) – a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases. Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure and even death.
- ❖ **pandemic** (noun) – the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
- ❖ **brook** (verb) - tolerate, put up with, allow/accept (something like dissent/difference of opinion).
- ❖ **weaken** (verb) - damage, spoil, impair, ruin.
- ❖ **courtesy** (noun) - good manners.
- ❖ **social distancing** (noun) – a term means actively avoiding crowded public places, is a key element in decreasing the rapid spread of COVID-19. This is an effort intended to limit exposure by reducing face-to-face contact and preventing spread among people in community settings.
- ❖ **peril** (noun) – danger, jeopardy, risk, threat, uncertainty.

- ❖ **indulgence** (noun) – satisfaction, gratification, fulfilment, pleasureseeking, extravagance/ treat.
- ❖ **vanish** (verb) - disappear, pass, dwindle; end.
- ❖ **albeit** (conjunction) – though, even though, however.
- ❖ **for a while** (phrase) - for some time.
- ❖ **(close) on the heels of** (phrase) – very soon after something, following closely after something.
- ❖ **bite the dust** (phrase) - meet with disaster, be unsuccessful, suffer defeat.
- ❖ **evoke** (verb) – invoke, give rise to, bring forth, bring to mind.
- ❖ **devastated** (adjective) - very worried, distressed, shocked.
- ❖ **denouement** (noun) – ending, final outcome, end result, climax (of a situation).
- ❖ **perhaps** (adverb) – maybe, possibly.
- ❖ **new-normal** (phrase) - an atypical/unusual situation becoming as a typical/usual one.
- ❖ **take for granted** (phrase) – understand, assume, presume (something is true without cross-questioning it).
- ❖ **presume** (verb) – assume, suppose, guess/believe.
- ❖ **die-hard** (noun) - hard-core (follower/fan); traditionalist.
- ❖ **discard** (verb) - throw out, get rid of, abandon/shrug off.
- ❖ **ritual** (noun) - formalities/proceedings, celebration, festivity.
- ❖ **relive** (verb) - live through/remember (a past experience) again.
- ❖ **fabled** (adjective) - famous, well known, celebrated.
- ❖ **elevate** (verb) - uplift, raise, lift up.
- ❖ **rarefied** (adjective) – esoteric, very high, elevated, exclusive, select, private.
- ❖ **sound** (verb) - appear, look, seem.
- ❖ **trivial** (adjective) - insubstantial, superficial, insignificant, empty.
- ❖ **faithful** (noun) - a particular religious group (or) faith community.
- ❖ **attire** (noun) – clothing/clothes, garments, dress.
- ❖ **don** (verb) - put on, get dressed in.
- ❖ **take a bow** (phrase) - to bow towards someone (applauding).
- ❖ **turn up** (phrasal verb) - come, arrive, be present, attend.
- ❖ **stick to** (verb) - abide by, hold to, comply with.
- ❖ **room** (noun) – scope (for something to happen).
- ❖ **on the cusp of** (noun) – a point where something will change from one state to another.
- ❖ **resume** (verb) – restart, return to, come back to.
- ❖ **last** (verb) - continue, go/carry on, proceed.
- ❖ **only time will tell** (phrase) - used to say that an outcome/result/truth will be known at some time in the future after something happened.

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