

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (28 August 2024)

TOPICS COVERED

1. SC stays AYUSH Ministry's notification omitting key rule prohibiting misleading advertisements
2. SC notice to Gujarat on Sanjiv Bhatt's plea against conviction (GS Paper-IV: Ethics)
3. Satish Kumar named new Chairman of Railway Board
4. Himachal Assembly passes Bill raising marriage age for women to 21 from 18 (PCS)
5. Cheetah dies in Kuno park from suspected 'drowning' (GS Paper-III: Environment)
6. CDSCO grants approval for making RT-PCR testing kits to detect Mpox in India (GS Paper-III: Basic Science)
7. Northern bald ibis returns from near extinction (GS Paper-III: Environment)
8. Advancing equity, from COVID-19 to Mpox (GS Paper-III: Capital Market)
9. The continuing churn in the Chinese military (GS Paper-II: India-China)
10. On SEBI chairperson's conflicts of interests (GS Paper-II: Governance)
11. Correcting rumours can reduce support for vigilantes (GS Paper-I: Society)
12. OPEC+ output cut may push Indian refiners to source oil from Americas (GS Paper-II: International Groupings)
13. UN calls out China's 'problematic' human rights policies in Xinjiang (GS Paper-I: World Geography)
14. Mpox outbreaks in Africa resulted from neglect, say experts (GS Paper-II: IR)
15. Experts flag new crackdown on Rohingya in Myanmar (GS Paper-II: IR)
16. Jay Shah set to become youngest ICC chairperson (PCS)
17. Karthik clinches title after three-way tie for top spot (PCS)
18. Michal Szubarczyk — Poland's snooker prodigy aiming to take the world by storm (PCS)

SC stays AYUSH Ministry's notification omitting key rule prohibiting misleading advertisements

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed a July 1 notification issued by the AYUSH Ministry in which Rule 170 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 was "omitted". The Rule deals with the power to take action against objectionable or misleading advertisements about Ayurvedic, Siddha, and Unani drugs.

A Bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Sandeep Mehta told Additional Solicitor General K. Nataraj that the notification was in the teeth of a May 7 order passed by the Supreme Court in a contempt case against Patanjali Ayurved Limited, a company co-



The intention of the May 7 order was to enforce Rule 170. Now, in view of this omission, any manufacturer can with impunity go around advertising its drugs

JUSTICE SANDEEP MEHTA

founded by yoga guru Baba Ramdev.

The May 7 order had directed the Ministry to withdraw its August 29, 2023 letter sent to drug licensing authorities across States and Union Territories informing them that Rule 170 was no longer operational on the basis of a recommendation made by the Ayurvedic, Siddha, and

Unani Drugs Technical Advisory Board (ASUDTAB) to omit the provision. The Ministry had agreed to comply with the court's order.

However, the Ministry went on to issue the July 1 notification, which did not withdraw the August 2023 letter, while omitting to bring Rule 170 back into play. "The intention of the May 7 order was to enforce

Rule 170. Now, in view of this omission, any manufacturer can with impunity go around advertising its drugs," Justice Mehta said.

'Violation order'

Mr. Nataraj said he would file an affidavit to explain. "This flies in the teeth. No affidavit. We are quashing your notification here and now. How could you file this with an affidavit explaining it? We are really surprised. You are violating our order. This is not appreciated," Justice Kohli noted.

In its order, the court recorded that the Centre "instead of withdrawing the letter dated August 29, 2023, for reasons best known to the Ministry, a

notification dated July 1 to omit Rule 170 of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945 has been issued which runs contrary to directions issued by this court".

Meanwhile, the Bench found the unconditional apology published in 20 editions of the print version of *The Hindu* by Indian Medical Association (IMA) president R.V. Asokan was illegible as the font was minuscule.

The IMA, which had filed the contempt case against Patanjali Ayurved, saw a reversal of fortune when the court took serious exception to remarks made by Dr. Asokan about a Supreme Court order in the case during a media interview.

Patriotic

Badlapur hearing: HC asks govt. to constitute panel for gender sensitisation of boys

The Hindu Bureau

MUMBAI

The Bombay High Court on Tuesday raised grave concerns over lapses in the implementation of the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act** and asked for a committee to be constituted for gender sensitisation of boys in schools.

Hearing a **suo motu public interest litigation (PIL)** in the sexual assault case of two four-year-old girls in Badlapur town of Maharashtra's Thane district, a Division Bench of Justice **Revati Mohite Dere** and Justice **Prithviraj K. Chavan** asked Advocate General **Birendra Saraf** for State to submit names for the panel.



We talk about victims but don't convey to the boys what is wrong and what is right. The committee needs to work on changing the mindset of boys at a young age

BOMBAY HC BENCH

"We talk about victims but don't convey to the boys what is wrong and what is right. The committee needs to work on changing the mindset of boys at a young age. The **Education Department needs to help with gender sensitisation,**" the Bench orally observed.

Mr. Saraf informed the Bench of a Government Re-

solution passed on August 23 regarding the same, but was told to see if the panel could include a retired judge and a representative from **Parent Teacher Associations**, among others.

Police pulled up

The court, after going through the investigation report, pulled up Maharashtra Police for **not adhering to the POCSO Act by calling the victim and her family to record their statements at the police station, and omitting the name of the victim's class teacher. It directed that a female prosecutor be appointed to the case.**

The **court also slammed the media for being insensitive and revealing the name of the school and victims.**





Field trip: Students release snakehead murrel fish into a paddy field as they learn integrated farming with rice and fish on the college campus in Vijayawada on Tuesday. K.V.S. GIRI

GS Paper III: Agriculture

Snakehead Murrel Fish

- **Snakehead murrel fish**, also known as **mudfish** or **snakehead**, belong to the family Channidae.
- They are native to South and Southeast Asia but have been introduced to other regions, including some Pacific Islands.

Unique Characteristics:

- **Air-breathing:** Unlike most fish that rely solely on gills for oxygen, snakehead murrel fish have a suprabranchial accessory respiratory organ that allows them to breathe air. This adaptation enables them to survive in low-oxygen environments, such as stagnant ponds or marshes.
- **Predatory Nature:** Snakehead murrels are carnivorous and voracious eaters. They feed on a variety of aquatic organisms, including smaller fish, insects, crustaceans, and even small mammals.
- **Snake-like Appearance:** Their elongated, snake-like bodies and large mouths give them a fearsome appearance.
- **Invasiveness:** In some regions, snakehead murrels have become invasive species, outcompeting native fish for food and habitat.

Economic Importance:

- **Food Source:** Snakehead murrel fish are a popular food source in many parts of Asia, especially in India, Bangladesh, and Thailand. They are prized for their delicate flavor and firm texture.
- **Aquaculture:** Due to their fast growth rate and adaptability, snakehead murrels are increasingly being cultured in aquaculture ponds.





Satish Kumar

Satish Kumar named new Chairman of Railway Board

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved the appointment of Satish Kumar as the Chairman and CEO of Railway Board on Tuesday.

Mr. Kumar will assume charge from September 1, till the date of his superannuation and his re-employment on a contract basis, from January 1 till August 31, 2025, said the DoPT notification.

Himachal Assembly passes Bill raising marriage age for women to 21 from 18

PCS

The Himachal Pradesh Assembly on Tuesday passed a Bill increasing the minimum age of marriage for women from 18 to 21 in order to support equality and higher education.

The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Himachal Pradesh Amendment) Bill, 2024 was introduced by Women Empowerment Minister Dhani Ram Shandil. The Bill was passed by voice vote. It states that the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 was enacted to prohibit solemnisation of child marriage and matters related to it.

“In today’s world the women are progressing in every field. The early marriages, however, act as a hindrance not only in the progress of their career but



We are the first State to enact legislation to increase the marriage age of girls. The Congress has always been at the forefront to work towards the betterment of women

SUKHVINDER SINGH SUKHU
Chief Minister

also in their physical development. In order to provide for gender equality and opportunities of obtaining higher education, it has become necessary to increase the minimum age of marriage for the girls. Thus, it is proposed to amend the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 and other related Acts in their application to the State of Himachal Pradesh and increase the minimum age for marriage for girls to

21 years,” the Bill states.

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu told *The Hindu* the Bill clearly showed the intent of the government to focus on serving the best interests of women. “We are the first State in the country to enact the legislation to increase the marriage age of girls to 21. The Congress has always been at the forefront to work towards the betterment of women,” he said.

Patriotic

CDSCO grants approval for making RT-PCR testing kits to detect Mpox in India

GS Paper III: Basic Science

NEW DELHI

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation has granted approval to Siemens Healthineers for the manufacture of RT-PCR testing kits for detection of Mpox, a senior Health Ministry official said on Tuesday.

The kits will be manufactured by the company's molecular diagnostics manufacturing unit in Vadodara, with a production capacity of one million a year.

With the RT-PCR kits, the test results will be available in 40 minutes, which is significantly faster than traditional methods. This will help reduce the turnaround time for reporting, leading to quicker responses, the company said.



The Union Health Ministry said the approval for the testing kit was given last week.

“The IMDX Monkeypox Detection RT-PCR Assay is a molecular diagnostic test that targets two distinct regions in the viral genome, spanning both clade I and clade II variants of the virus. This ensures thorough detection across various viral strains, providing comprehensive results. This assay is platform-agnostic and seamlessly fits into existing lab workflows with

standard PCR setups, eliminating the need for new instruments. The ability to use existing COVID testing infrastructure would enhance the efficiency,” Hariharan Subramanian, managing director, Siemens Healthcare, said.

“By providing India with advanced assay kits tailored to combat Mpox, we are taking a proactive stance in battling this disease and prioritising prompt and precise detection that can truly make a difference in saving lives,” he added.

Clinically validated by the Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Virology, Pune, the assay boasts 100% sensitivity and specificity.

The Union Health Ministry said the approval for the kit was given last week.

Patriotic

'India-Brazil strategic partnership deepened and diversified over years'

PCS

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The India-Brazil strategic partnership has “deepened and diversified” over the years and now spans a very wide range of domains, including defence, space, security, technology and people-to-people relations, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Tuesday.

In his opening remarks at the ninth India-Brazil Joint Commission Meeting (JCM) in Delhi, Mr. Jaishankar congratulated the Latin American country for conducting the G-20 meetings successfully and, also on the first Ministerial consensus document released during a key meeting.

“I would like to reiterate India’s full support to the Brazilian G-20 presidency and also recall that we got your fullest support during



Close partners: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar with Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira in New Delhi on Tuesday. ANI

our own presidency. We appreciate various unique initiatives centred on the theme of building a just world and a sustainable planet,” he said.

Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira, who arrived here on August 25, said in his opening remarks that President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva will be glad to welcome Prime Mi-

nister Narendra Modi at the G-20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro in November.

Brazil is currently the chair of the influential bloc. The G-20 presidency was relayed to Brazil by India last year.

Mr. Jaishankar, in his address, welcomed his Brazilian counterpart and the delegation and said he looks forward to a “very

productive Joint Commission Meeting”.

“Our strategic partnership, which was established in 2006, has deepened and diversified over the years,” he said. India and Brazil have a “substantial bilateral trade basket” and it has by and large gone up, adding that in the last year, “we have had some challenges” and that is something he looks forward to discuss with Mr. Vieira, he said.

Mr. Vieira said Brazil and India, as “vibrant and multi-ethnic democracies” from the developing world, represent a “positive drive” to international affairs. “Both our governments work towards achieving sustainable development and prosperity for our societies. We hold a common view on many pressing issues on the global agenda,” he said.

Patriotic



Northern bald ibises during a flight supported by their 'foster parents' on a micro-light aircraft. AP

Northern bald ibis returns from near extinction

GS Paper III: Environment

The northern bald ibis, hunted virtually to extinction by the 17th century, was revived by breeding and rewilding efforts over the last two decades.

But the birds – known for their distinctive black-and-iridescent green plumage, bald red head and long curved beak – do not instinctively know which direction to fly to migrate without the guidance of wild-born elders. So a team of scientists and conservationists stepped in as foster parents and flight instructors.

The northern bald ibis once soared over North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, and much of Europe. The birds were also considered a delicacy and disappeared

Though northern bald ibises still display the natural urge to migrate, they do not know which way to fly without the guidance of wild-born elders

from Europe.

The efforts of biologist Johannes Fritz and the Waldrappteam, a conservation group in Austria, brought the Central European population from zero to almost 300 since the start of their project in 2002. The feat moved the species from a "critically endangered" classification to "endangered" and, Mr. Fritz says, is the first attempt to reintroduce a continentally extinct migratory bird species.

Though northern bald ibises still display the natural urge to migrate, they do not know which way to fly without the guidance of wild-born elders. The Waldrappteam's early reintroduction attempts were largely unsuccessful because, without teaching the birds the migration route, most disappeared soon after release. Instead of returning to suitable wintering grounds in Italy, they flew in different directions and ultimately died. So the Waldrappteam stepped in as foster parents and flight instructors for the Central European population, which was made up of descendants from multiple zoo colonies and released into the wild in the hopes of creating a migratory group.

To prepare them for travel, the chicks are removed from their breeding colonies when they are just a few days old. They are taken to an aviary overseen by the foster parents in the hopes of "imprinting" – when the birds will bond with those humans to ultimately trust them along the migration route.

Bald Ibis

- **Bald ibis** is a common name for two distinct species of ibis: the **northern bald ibis** (*Geronticus eremita*) and the **southern bald ibis** (*Geronticus calvus*).
- Both species are characterized by their bare red heads and necks, as well as their long, curved bills.

Northern Bald Ibis

- **Habitat:** Primarily found in open areas such as grasslands, rocky mountains, and semi-deserts, often close to running water.
- **Distribution:** Historically, the northern bald ibis had a wider distribution, including parts of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. However, due to human activities, its current range is limited to parts of North Africa and the Middle East.
- **Conservation Status:** Critically Endangered according to the IUCN Red List.
- **Threats:** Habitat loss, hunting, and disturbance of breeding colonies are the primary threats to the northern bald ibis.



Southern Bald Ibis

- **Habitat:** Found in open grassland or semi-desert in the mountains of southern Africa.
- **Distribution:** Endemic to southern Africa.
- **Conservation Status:** Critically Endangered according to the IUCN Red List.
- **Threats:** Habitat loss and disturbance of breeding colonies are the primary threats to the southern bald ibis.

Conservation Efforts:

- Both species of bald ibis face significant conservation challenges. Various organizations and governments are working to protect these birds through habitat restoration, captive breeding programs, and public awareness campaigns.

Advancing equity, from COVID-19 to Mpox

GS Paper III: Capital Market

Less than five years after the COVID-19 pandemic, the world faces the threat of another global health crisis. The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has, once again, declared **mpox** (formerly known as monkeypox) a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), following its outbreak in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Africa**, and subsequently spreading to over a dozen African countries. This comes on the heels of the **Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention's (AfricaCDC)** declaration of a **Public Health Emergency of Continental Security (PHECS)**, marking the **first instance where both regional and global health emergencies have been declared concurrently for the same disease**. In the days following the PHEIC declaration, cases of mpox were identified in **Sweden, Pakistan and the Philippines**, indicating that the virus has likely spread beyond the African continent.

This WHO declaration is significant as it is the first PHEIC announced since the May 2024 amendments to the **International Health Regulations (IHR)**. And of all the IHR reforms, the **inclusion of equity as a core principle was perhaps the most important**. Although these amendments will not take effect until 2025, it is crucial that the **global response to the mpox outbreak is grounded in this principle from the outset**. Those amendments further expand **WHO's role as a facilitator of essential medical products during emergencies**.

A PHEIC is intended to foster international cooperation. **Countries, international organisations, and non-governmental organisations must collaborate to coordinate their responses, share information, and provide mutual assistance**. The declaration should **trigger the rapid mobilisation of financial and technical resources, including emergency funding, deployment of trained health-care workers, and provision of medical supplies**.

Mirroring the COVID-19 pandemic response

One of the most glaring shortcomings exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic was the **inadequacy of vaccine manufacturing capabilities in the Global South**, exacerbated by the **lack of technology transfers and the know-how to produce vaccines developed in the West**. So far, the global response to the mpox outbreak appears to be following a similar trajectory.

However, the present response to mpox differs significantly from COVID-19 in one key aspect: the availability of a vaccine. The Modified Vaccinia

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In the face of the mpox outbreak, the global community has the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to equitable prevention and health care by ensuring widespread access to a vaccine

Ankara-Bavarian Nordic (MVA-BN), also known as Jynneos, is already in production by Danish manufacturer Bavarian Nordic. This vaccine, produced using **primary chick embryo fibroblast (CEF) cell cultures**, shares its production process with several other vaccines, including those for **measles, mumps, rabies, and tick-borne encephalitis**. Regulatory authorities in the European Union and United Kingdom (marketed as Imvanex®), United States and Switzerland (marketed as Jynneos®), and Canada (marketed as Imvamune®) have already approved the vaccine.

The mpox outbreak presents an opportunity to apply lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic by ramping up vaccine production in the Global South, and leveraging the existing MVA-BN vaccine. **Indian manufacturers, in particular, have the potential to play a critical role in ensuring equitable access to this vaccine, ensuring it reaches the populations that need it the most, at the right time**. Indeed, **India was a critical partner during COVID-19, facilitating the mass production of the vaccine largely credited with saving the most lives – Oxford/AstraZeneca's vaccine marketed in India as Covishield**.

Ensuring technology transfers

As countries closely monitor the mpox outbreak, the demand for vaccines is expected to surge. The AfricaCDC estimates that 10 million doses are needed to stem the outbreak, yet only about 0.21 million doses may be available immediately. Bavarian Nordic has informed the AfricaCDC that it has the capacity to manufacture 10 million doses by the end of 2025. The price of an mpox shot has been estimated at \$100. This underscores the need for sustainable, low-cost production of the MVA-BN vaccine.

India is well-positioned to meet this challenge. **Three major vaccine manufacturers – the Serum Institute of India, Bharat Biotech, and Zydus Cadila – already have the experience of producing vaccines using CEF cells**. Notably, the Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech played pivotal roles in both the national and global responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These manufacturers likely have the expertise to quickly scale up MVA production in CEF cells. Additionally, they may already have established supply chains for key materials, such as SPF eggs, which could be leveraged to expand production. The lower cost structure of manufacturers in **lower-middle-income countries (LMICs)** could also reduce the price of vaccines, increasing demand and making doses more accessible.

Rapidly scaling up MVA-BN production will

require comprehensive technology transfer, including the sharing of biological resources, know-how, and patents. Often overlooked, the transfer of the relevant know-how is crucial and has historically been a major hurdle in outbreak responses. **It is the sharing of knowledge, rather than just doses, that distinguishes charity from justice**. Writing on the key contentious issues in the ongoing negotiations for the **WHO Pandemic Treaty** in this daily (Editorial page, "The global struggle for a pandemic treaty", August 1, 2024), these writers argued that technology transfers "are needed to ensure diverse manufacturing capacities globally so that LMICs are no longer reliant on 'charity' from high-income countries and can maintain self-sufficiency".

The Indian government, along with regulators, should collaborate with the United States, the European Union, and key international organisations such as WHO, Gavi, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), to negotiate with Bavarian Nordic for the transfer of technology. By leveraging the expertise and the experiences of these organisations and working with manufacturers in developing countries, these efforts can help scale low-cost production and ensure equitable access to the MVA-BN vaccine, thereby curtailing the epidemic and preventing further outbreaks. That would benefit countries both in the Global North and South.

A move with impact

In a recent significant move, on August 7, India's drug regulatory agency, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO), waived the requirement for clinical trials in India for drugs approved in the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, Canada, and the European Union. This waiver, which includes 'new drugs used in pandemic situations,' will expedite the availability of critical vaccines such as MVA-BN in the country.

In the face of the mpox outbreak, the global community has a critical opportunity to demonstrate its **commitment to equitable prevention and health care by ensuring widespread access to a mpox vaccine, targeted to those most in need**. By **fostering international cooperation, prioritising technology transfers, and leveraging the manufacturing capabilities of countries such as India**, we can not only address the current crisis but also strengthen our preparedness for future public health emergencies. The time to act is now, before history repeats itself.

Advancing equity, from COVID-19 to Mpox (28 August)

- The world faces a new health crisis, less than five years after COVID-19.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared mpox (formerly monkeypox) a global health emergency.
- The outbreak started in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and spread to over a dozen African countries.
- The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) also declared a regional health emergency.
- This is the first time both global and regional health emergencies have been declared simultaneously for the same disease.
- Mpox cases have now been found in Sweden, Pakistan, and the Philippines, indicating the virus has spread beyond Africa.
- The WHO's declaration is important because it's the first one since changes were made to international health rules in May 2024.
- These new rules emphasize equity, meaning fair access to resources for all countries, especially during health crises.
- Although these rules won't take effect until 2025, it's important to apply the equity principle now in response to the mpox outbreak.
- The declaration aims to encourage international cooperation, with countries and organizations working together to share resources and information.
- It should also lead to the quick deployment of financial aid, healthcare workers, and medical supplies to affected areas.

Mirroring the COVID-19 pandemic response

- The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that the Global South struggled with vaccine production due to a lack of technology and expertise.
- The response to the mpox outbreak is showing similar issues.
- However, there is a key difference: a vaccine for mpox already exists.
- The vaccine, called MVA-BN or Jynneos, is made by a Danish company, Bavarian Nordic.
- This vaccine uses a production process similar to vaccines for measles, mumps, rabies, and tick-borne encephalitis.
- The vaccine is approved in several regions, including the European Union, United Kingdom, United States, Switzerland, and Canada.
- The mpox outbreak is an opportunity to improve vaccine production in the Global South, using the existing MVA-BN vaccine.
- Indian manufacturers could play a crucial role in making sure the vaccine is available to those who need it most.
- India was instrumental during COVID-19 by mass-producing the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine (Covishield) which saved many lives.

Ensuring technology transfers

- As the mpox outbreak spreads, the demand for vaccines is expected to rise.
- Africa CDC estimates that 10 million vaccine doses are needed, but only 0.21 million are currently available.
- Bavarian Nordic, the vaccine manufacturer, can produce 10 million doses by the end of 2025.
- The cost of one mpox vaccine shot is estimated at \$100, highlighting the need for more affordable vaccine production.
- India is well-suited to help with this challenge, as its major vaccine manufacturers have experience in producing vaccines using the same technology.
- The Serum Institute of India, Bharat Biotech, and Zydus Cadila are key players with the potential to scale up production quickly.
- These manufacturers likely already have supply chains for key materials, like SPF eggs, which are needed for vaccine production.
- Lower production costs in countries like India could reduce vaccine prices, making them more accessible.
- To increase production, technology transfer is essential, including sharing knowledge, patents, and resources.
- Sharing knowledge is crucial for empowering countries to produce vaccines independently, not just relying on donations.
- The Indian government, along with international organizations, should work with Bavarian Nordic to negotiate technology transfers.
- This collaboration can help scale up low-cost vaccine production, ensuring fair access and helping to control the outbreak worldwide.

A move with impact

- On August 7, India's drug regulatory agency, CDSCO, made an important decision.
- They waived the requirement for clinical trials in India for drugs already approved in countries like the US, UK, Japan, Australia, Canada, and the EU.

- This waiver includes new drugs needed during pandemics, speeding up the availability of critical vaccines like MVA-BN in India.
- The global community now has a chance to show its commitment to fair access to health care by ensuring widespread access to the mpox vaccine, especially for those most in need.
- By encouraging international cooperation, focusing on technology transfers, and using the manufacturing strengths of countries like India, we can tackle the current mpox crisis and be better prepared for future health emergencies.
- Immediate action is necessary to prevent repeating past mistakes.

Mpox (Monkeypox)

- Mpox, referred to as monkeypox, is a viral zoonotic disease caused by the **monkeypox virus**, which belongs to the Orthopoxvirus family.
- This disease was first identified in 1958 when outbreaks occurred in laboratory monkeys, hence the name "monkeypox." However, it is primarily found in rodents and other small mammals in endemic regions.

Transmission:

1. Zoonotic Transmission:

- Mpox is primarily transmitted to humans from animals, typically through direct contact with the blood, bodily fluids, or lesions of infected animals, such as rodents or primates.

2. Human-to-Human Transmission:

- The virus can also spread between humans through respiratory droplets during prolonged face-to-face contact, or by direct skin contact with lesions or contaminated materials (such as bedding or clothing).

Symptoms:

The symptoms of mpox are similar to those of smallpox, although generally milder. They typically appear within 5 to 21 days after exposure and can include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Chills
- Exhaustion
- A rash that usually begins on the face and then spreads to other parts of the body

The rash typically progresses through several stages: macules, papules, vesicles, pustules, and finally scabs.

Variants:

Two distinct clades (variants) of the monkeypox virus exist:

- **West African clade:** Usually leads to milder disease and has lower mortality rates.
- **Congo Basin clade:** Associated with more severe disease and higher mortality rates.

Treatment and Prevention:

1. Vaccination:

- Prior smallpox vaccination is thought to provide some cross-protection against mpox due to the similarities between the two viruses. Newer vaccine options specifically targeting mpox are also available.

2. Antiviral Treatments:

- Antiviral medications, such as tecovirimat (TPOXX), have been used, especially in severe cases or for those with weakened immune systems. The use of Vaccinia immune globulin intravenous (VIG) can also be employed in certain cases.

3. Preventive Measures:

- Avoiding contact with animals that could harbor the virus.
- Practicing good hygiene and sanitation to avoid transmission, especially in outbreak situations.
- Quarantine measures for individuals exposed to the virus.

The continuing churn in the Chinese military (28 August)

- On August 1, 2024, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) celebrated its 97th anniversary with events, but there were also quiet changes in military leadership.
- Generals Wu Yanan and Huang Ming took over as commanders of the Southern and Northern Theaters, respectively.
- These leadership changes follow a series of dismissals and replacements in the PLA, raising questions about the reasons behind them.
- The Southern Theater has faced issues, especially with recent skirmishes with the Philippines in the South China Sea, drawing criticism from countries like Japan and the US.
- With growing external pressures, the PLA is expected to become a "world-class" military, ready for regional conflicts.
- The removal of General Wang Xiubin as Southern Theater commander may indicate dissatisfaction with his performance in strengthening China's naval power.
- Internal politics and inefficiencies within the Southern Theater may also have contributed to Wang's replacement.
- In June 2024, a political conference revealed poor performance in a joint naval exercise, particularly among political officers who failed in their mobilization duties.
- In April 2024, there were discussions about tensions between older veterans and new leaders in the Southern Theater, leading to efforts to improve cohesion and efficiency.

- Despite reforms starting in 2015 to create a flawless military, recent developments in the Southern Theater highlight challenges and weaknesses in achieving this vision.

Implications for the PLA

- General Wu Yanan's leadership in the Southern Theater command is significant and likely tied to his experience working closely with key political figures.
- Wu has extensive experience from his time with the Central Military Commission (CMC) and as Commander of the Central Theater, where he dealt with important national security issues.
- His appointment might be aimed at ensuring strict implementation of the Chinese Communist Party's reform agenda in the Southern Theater, especially in achieving coordination between different military forces.
- Soon after his appointment, the Southern Theater declared it has "everything under control" and conducted joint maritime and aerial patrols near the Scarborough Islands, showing a focus on testing military capabilities.
- Under Wu's leadership, there will likely be increased emphasis on combat readiness and political cohesion, with more frequent military demonstrations in the South China Sea.
- The broader picture suggests that the PLA's reforms are still incomplete, and the ongoing period of changes, marked by purges and replacements due to corruption and reform challenges, is far from over.
- The new leadership is expected to focus on improving internal operations to help the PLA move closer to its goal of becoming a "world-class" military force by mid-century.

Lessons for India

- India needs to closely observe the changes in the PLA's leadership to understand the nature of leadership in the Chinese military.
- In the PLA, military commanders are chosen not just for their skills or experience but also for their loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its goals.
- Since China is India's main rival and biggest military challenge, it is crucial for India to study how the PLA's reforms are evolving.
- India should analyze these leadership changes within the broader context of the PLA's reform agenda to better understand China's military strategies and intentions.

Coordinated attacks (28 August 2024)

Pakistan cannot take a militaristic approach to the Baloch conflict

- Since the Taliban regained control of Kabul in August 2021, Pakistan has faced a rise in terrorist attacks, especially in its Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces.
- In 2023, over 650 attacks were recorded in Pakistan, with 23% occurring in Balochistan, a region known for its separatist insurgency.
- On August 26, 2023, one of the bloodiest days for Balochistan, separatists carried out coordinated attacks across the province on the death anniversary of Nawab Akbar Bugti, a Baloch nationalist leader killed by the Pakistani military in 2006.
- The Baloch Liberation Army claimed responsibility for these attacks, which targeted infrastructure and migrant laborers from Punjab, highlighting the growing strength and reach of the insurgency.
- Pakistan has historically taken a harsh, military approach to dealing with the Baloch problem, neglecting the province despite its rich natural resources.
- This neglect has fueled anti-Punjab sentiments within parts of the Baloch community, as Punjab has become more influential and prosperous.
- Separatists have used the poor living conditions in Balochistan to gain support, often accusing the federal government of exploiting the region's resources without benefiting the local economy.
- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which passes through Balochistan, has been cited by separatists as an example of exploitation, leading them to target Chinese interests.
- The Pakistani government has failed to engage with civil rights movements in Balochistan, often labeling activists as "enemies of Pakistan," which has led to a reliance on military force against separatists.
- State violence has only strengthened the separatist movement, as evidenced by the recent attacks.
- For stability and security in Balochistan, Pakistan needs to address the developmental concerns of the local population, stop human rights violations, and engage with peaceful civil rights groups to rebuild relations with the Baloch people.

Reasonable limits (28 August 2024)

Laissez-faire approach to content hosting, not commitment to free speech

- Free speech is not unlimited and can be restricted for public order, morals, and public health, as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

- Pavel Durov, the founder of Telegram, promotes absolute free speech on his platform, allowing dissidents to use it, which has led to conflicts with various governments.
- Durov's arrest by French authorities, linked to criminal activities on Telegram, raises concerns about whether this is an attempt to suppress free speech online.
- Telegram's loose approach to content has allowed it to become a platform for extremism, drug dealers, scammers, and child pornography, according to French authorities.
- Durov argues that privacy and freedom are more important than the potential harm caused by such activities.
- Telegram is more than a messaging app, with social networking features, but unlike apps like Signal, it doesn't use full end-to-end encryption, meaning Telegram can read some messages and act on law enforcement requests.
- Telegram claims its content moderation is within industry standards and questions whether the platform or its owner should be held responsible for misuse.
- If investigations in France show that Telegram refused to address hate speech, disinformation, or criminal content, Durov could be held accountable.
- In India, the harmful effects of misinformation on platforms like WhatsApp led to restrictions that reduced its spread.
- For Telegram to continue as a platform for free speech, it needs to avoid being too extreme and take more responsibility in moderating content.

On SEBI chairperson's conflicts of interests (28 August)

The actions and statements of SEBI chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch are in conflict with regulatory integrity; the SEBI's citation of Hindenburg's own conflict of interest in the matter as a short-seller, does not hold much water

- Over two weeks have passed since a Hindenburg Research report revealed serious conflicts of interest involving the chairperson of SEBI.
- On August 11, SEBI issued an unsigned statement, and Madhabi and Dhaval Buch issued a joint statement, confirming the validity of Hindenburg's claims, raising concerns about SEBI's integrity.
- The Central government, responsible for appointing SEBI's members, is expected to provide explanations to all stakeholders.
- The first conflict of interest involves a \$872,762 (₹5.6 crore in 2015) investment made by Madhabi and Dhaval Buch in a Bermuda-based fund, managed by Mumbai-based IIFL Wealth & Asset Management (now 360 One).
- Madhabi and Dhaval Buch's statement confirmed the 2015 investment, attributing it to the fund's CIO, Anil Ahuja, a childhood friend of Dhaval Buch.
- The investment was redeemed in 2018 when Anil Ahuja left his position, but the statement did not disclose that Ahuja was also a director at Adani Enterprises during the investment period.
- An email from Hindenburg shows Madhabi Buch initiated the redemption request in 2018 when she was already a SEBI whole-time member.
- Two key questions arise: Was this investment disclosed to the government before Madhabi Buch's SEBI appointment, and did her shareholding in the fund have Board approval until its redemption in 2018? The Central government needs to clarify these issues.

OPEC+ (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries):

OPEC+ is a consortium of oil-producing countries that coordinates global oil production levels to influence oil prices. It's a combination of the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** and a group of **non-OPEC oil producers**.

OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries):

- **Founded:** 1960
- **Secretary General:** Haitham al-Ghais
- **Headquarter:** Vienna, Austria
- **Members:** Currently 13 countries, including Algeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Venezuela.
- **Goal:** To coordinate petroleum policies among its members and ensure the stabilization of oil markets.
- **Influence:** OPEC members account for a significant portion of global oil production, giving them considerable influence over oil prices.

Non-OPEC Producers:

- **Members:** Include Russia, Mexico, Kazakhstan, and Malaysia.
- **Collaboration:** These countries collaborate with OPEC within the OPEC+ framework.
- **Influence:** Their participation expands the reach and impact of OPEC+ in regulating global oil supply.

OPEC+ Cooperation:

- **Joint Decisions:** OPEC+ members jointly decide on production levels and other policies to influence oil prices.
- **Market Stabilization:** The alliance aims to stabilize oil markets by adjusting production to meet global demand and avoid price volatility.
- **Response to Global Events:** OPEC+ can respond to economic changes, geopolitical events, and demand fluctuations by modifying its production strategy.

Significance of OPEC+

- **Global Energy Landscape:** OPEC+ plays a crucial role in shaping the global energy landscape.
- **Price Influence:** Its decisions can significantly impact oil prices, affecting economies worldwide.
- **Market Coordination:** The alliance provides a platform for coordinated action among oil-producing countries.

Jay Shah set to become youngest ICC chairperson (28 August)

- Jay Shah, current BCCI secretary, is set to become the youngest chairman of the International Cricket Council (ICC) on December 1.
- Shah is the only candidate proposed for the position, so he will be elected unopposed, succeeding Greg Barclay.
- Shah, 35, will join previous Indian ICC chairpersons like Jagmohan Dalmiya, Sharad Pawar, N. Srinivasan, and Shashank Manohar.
- He will leave his roles as BCCI secretary and Asian Cricket Council chairperson due to ICC rules requiring an independent chair.
- Shah has been involved in cricket administration for a decade and was elected BCCI secretary in 2019.

Karthik clinches title after three-way tie for top spot (28 August)

- Karthik Venkataraman won the 61st National chess championship with 9 points from 11 rounds.
- He finished ahead of Surya Shekhar Ganguly and Neelash Saha, who also had 9 points but lower tie-break scores.
- Ganguly, who was leading until the final round, ended with a draw and did not win his seventh National title.
- Karthik secured his victory by winning his final game against Mitrabha Guha using the Caro-Kann Defence.
- Final standings were: 1-3. Karthik, Ganguly, Saha (9 points); 4-9. Diptayan, Aronyak, Gusain, Lalith, Abhijeet, Shyaam (8.5 points); 10-18. Sethuraman, Venkatesh, Sayantan, Ajay, D'cunha, Nitin, Arjun Adireddy, Vishakh, Shrayan (8 points).

Michal Szubarczyk — Poland's snooker prodigy aiming to take the world by storm (28 August)

- Michal Szubarczyk, a 13-year-old from Poland, performed well in the IBSF World under-17 boys' snooker championship.
- He won all his group stage matches and advanced to the semifinals but lost to Thailand's Lomnaw Issarangkun.
- Michal impressed with breaks of 82, 48, and 84 in his match against Saudi Arabia's Abdulaziz Alaswad.
- Inspired by Ronnie O'Sullivan, Michal started playing snooker at age six with his father's encouragement.
- His father, Kamil, also acts as his coach and manager and is pursuing a coaching certification to better support Michal.
- Despite Poland's limited snooker facilities and lower popularity of the sport, Kamil is determined to help Michal succeed and raise the sport's profile in Poland.
- They face challenges including lack of funding and support, as snooker is not an Olympic sport in Poland.
- Michal has achieved notable success, including winning bronze in the European under-16 championship and national titles in Poland.
- The IBSF World under-17 championship provides valuable experience and exposure despite not offering professional cards.

Right mindset

- Kamil Szubarczyk emphasizes the importance of having the right mindset for success.
- Michal, like many teenagers, faces distractions such as phones and social media, which Kamil actively keeps away to maintain focus.
- Despite the harsh approach, this dedication is seen as necessary for achieving goals.
- Michal's current biggest dream is to play professional snooker.
- Kamil encourages Michal to aim higher, prompting him to express his true goal: becoming a world champion in professional snooker.