ENGLISH EDITORIAL

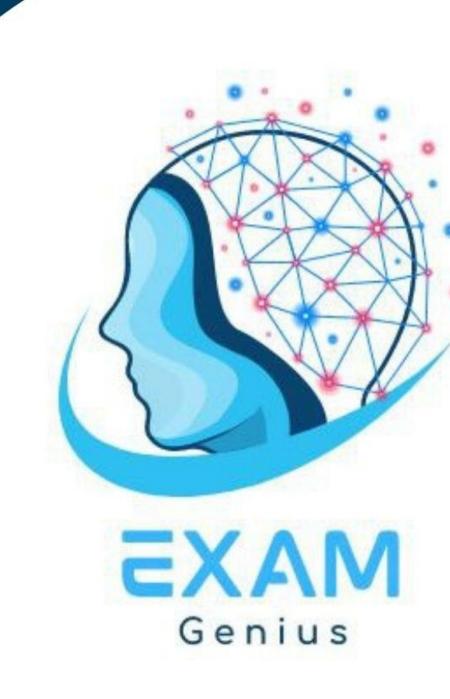
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EDITORIAL 01

Apathy continues: On Africa and the mpox vaccine response

Africa is not getting mpox vaccines despite the disease being endemic there for three years

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared mpox to be a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) for the second time in two years following its outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and its spread to over a dozen countries in Africa. The multi-country outbreak in Europe, in 2022, had led to a declaration of a PHEIC. WHO's announcement comes a day after the Africa CDC declared the outbreak to be a public health emergency of continental security (PHECS), also marking the first time a regional and global health emergency has been declared for a disease outbreak. If this is first such declaration in Africa of a PHECS since 2017, it is also the first time that WHO has declared a PHEIC for a disease outbreak in Africa on the very first time the emergency committee met to decide on the matter. Though WHO claimed in August 2014 that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa was declared a







public health emergency in the very first meeting of the emergency committee, an Associated Press investigation revealed how WHO resisted calling it a public health emergency for a few months. In the second Ebola outbreak in Africa in 2018-19, WHO declared it a public health emergency only when the emergency committee met for the fourth time.

If the 2022 mpox outbreak in the U.K, that spread to over 100 countries, was caused by the milder clade 2b virus — primarily affecting men who have sex with men, with limited cases among children and adolescents — the current outbreak is driven by a new and more lethal clade 1b, spread effectively through sexual and nonsexual contact. There have been 2,863 confirmed cases and 517 deaths this year, primarily in the DRC. The clade 1b emerged in the DRC in September 2023, with human-to-human transmission ongoing since then. In the DRC, around two-thirds of infections are in children under 15 years. Vaccines are again in acute short supply. As against 10 million doses needed to control the outbreak, just about 0.21 million doses may be supplied immediately. Even when vaccines were used to blunt transmission in Europe and the U.S. earlier, vaccines were not supplied to Africa despite mpox being endemic there for years. Currently, only the DRC and Nigeria have







pranted emergency use authorisation for the vaccine. The regulatory hurdle can be sidestepped if the company expresses interest for WHO's emergency use listing, which will allow international agencies to supply the vaccine to all African countries. Even then, Africa will have to wait till the end of 2025 for the 10 million doses.

SUMMARY

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared mpox a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) for the second time in two years, following its outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and its spread to over a dozen African countries. This comes a day after the Africa CDC declared the outbreak a public health emergency of continental security (PHECS), marking the first time a regional and global health emergency has been declared for a disease outbreak in Africa. The current outbreak is driven by a new, more lethal clade 1b, spread effectively through sexual and non-sexual contact. Vaccines are in acute short supply, with only 0.21 million doses available. Despite mpox being endemic in Africa for three years, only the DRC and Nigeria have granted emergency use authorization for the vaccine.







Vocabulary

1. Apathy

Synonyms: Indifference, lethargy, disinterest

Antonyms: enthusiasm, passion, empathy

2. Reveal

Synonyms: Disclose, expose, unveil

Antonyms: Conceal, hide, suppress

3. Resist

Synonyms: Defy, challenge, protest

Antonyms: Surrender, yield, comply

4. Outbreak

Synonyms: Epidemic, surge, riot

Antonyms: Decline, decrease, lull

5. Mild

Synonyms: Moderate, gentle, mellow

Antonyms: Extreme, severe, harsh





6. Lethal

Synonyms: Fatal, deadly, mortal

Antonyms: Gentle, benign, mild

7. Hurdle

Synonyms: Obstacle, barrier, challenge

Antonyms: Advantage, aid, boost

8. Acute

Synonyms: Sharp, keen, critical

Antonyms: Mild, gentle, dull

9. Blunt

Synonyms: Dull, obtuse, muted

Antonyms: sharp, keen, acute

10. Sidestepped

Synonyms: Evaded, avoided, skirted

Antonyms: Confronted, faced, addressed





EDITORIAL 02

Neighbourhood troubles: On India and instability in the region

Thailand's royalty-military establishment thrives by triggering instability

Thailand's youngest Prime Minister, 37-year-old Paetongtarn Shinawatra, was elected by the Parliament on Friday after the constitutional court ousted Srettha Thavisin. Ms. Paetongtarn is the youngest daughter of former Thai Prime Minister and tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra, and the fourth member of her family to hold the position. Mr. Thaksin was removed in a coup in 2006, while Ms. Paetongtarn's uncle Somchai Wongsawat was dismissed by the constitutional court in 2008, and her aunt Yingluck Shinawatra was also dismissed, again by the same court, in 2014. The latest change of Prime Minister mirrors several such sudden dismissals of the past that are attributed to Thailand's conservative establishment. Mr. Srettha was among more than a dozen Prime Ministers appointed since 2001. Significantly, the court held Mr. Srettha guilty of ethical violations for appointing a Cabinet Minister who had been







convicted for attempting to bribe a judge overseeing Mr. Thaksin's corruption cases more than a decade ago. Mr. Srettha was himself only elected in 2023, when the reformist Move Forward Party, which won the most seats in the elections, was disqualified from forming a government and banned for suggesting changes to the strict laws governing criticism of the monarchy. As a result, Ms. Paetongtarn's chances of a smooth term in office, and making radical changes to the system seem bleak. Her most important task would be to help nudge Thailand's sluggish economy back into shape while averting the fate of her predecessors. Given her age and lack of experience, she is expected to be guided mainly by her father, who is back after his exile in the UAE over corruption charges, following a compromise with the establishment.

The developments come at a time of instability in India's Indian Ocean neighbourhood to the east — the ouster of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has sent the country into a period of uncertainty, which the interim government must contend with. The developments follow a spurt in violence between militant groups and Myanmar's embattled junta that imperil India's investments as well as peace along the border with India's north-east. With Sri Lanka also heading for presidential elections in September,







Thailand's crisis has cast another shadow over plans to hold the BIMSTEC summit in Bangkok on September 4. Many agreements to be adopted on digital payment mechanisms, connectivity, and maritime cooperation have already been negotiated, and it is to be hoped that the summit will now not need to be put off. While Ms. Paetongtarn's election may suggest some stability in the short term, New Delhi must keep its shock absorbers on, to deal with other surprise crises and seemingly chronic instability in the neighbourhood.

SUMMARY

Thailand's youngest Prime Minister, 37-year-old Paetongtarn
Shinawatra, was elected after the constitutional court ousted
Srettha Thavisin. Thaksin Shinawatra was removed in a coup in
2006, and her uncle Somchai Wongsawat was dismissed in 2008
and 2014. The recent change mirrors past dismissals by Thailand's
conservative establishment, with Srettha being convicted of ethical
violations for appointing a Cabinet Minister. Paetongtarn's chances
of a smooth term and radical changes to the system seem bleak.
The developments come at a time of instability in India's Indian
Ocean neighbourhood, with the ouster of Bangladesh Prime
Minister Sheikh Hasina sending the country into uncertainty. The
crisis has cast another shadow over plans to hold the BIMSTEC

summit in Bangkok. New Delhi must keep its shock absorbers on to deal with other surprise crises and chronic instability in the region.

Vocabulary

1. Ousted

Synonyms: expelled, fired, sacked

Antonyms: Elected, appointed, retained

2. Tycoon

Synonyms: Magnate, mogul, baron

Antonyms: Peon, worker, labour

3. Convicted

Synonyms: Sentenced, punished, condemned

Antonyms: Acquitted, cleared, vindicated

4. Bribe

Synonyms: Incentive, reward, gift

Antonyms: penalty, fine, punishment







5. Radical

Synonyms: Revolutionary, extremist

Antonyms: Moderate, conservative, traditional

6. Bleak

Synonyms: Desolate, barren, grim

Antonyms: Cheerful, optimistic, hopeful

7. Nudge

Synonyms: Push, poke, jab

Antonyms: Attract, draw, repel

8. Sluggish

Synonyms: Slow, torpid, lazy

Antonyms: Vigorous, lively, brisk

9. Averting

Synonyms: Preventing, avoiding, dodging

Antonyms: Causing, triggering, prvoking







10. Spurt

Synonyms: Burst, surge, gush

Antonyms: trickle, drip, drizzle

11. Embattled

Synonyms: Besieged, assaulted, harassed

Antonyms: Peaceful, serene, calm





