

Monkey virus

What is the monkey pox virus?

- Monkey pox is not a new virus.
- The virus, belonging to the poxvirus family of viruses, was first identified in monkey's way back in 1958, and therefore the name.
- The first human case was described in 1970 from the Democratic Republic of Congo and many sporadic outbreaks of animal to human as well as human to human transmission has occurred in Central and West Africa in the past with significant mortality
- Since the transmission occurs only with close contact, the outbreaks have been in many cases self-limiting.
- While monkeys are possibly only incidental hosts, the reservoir is not known.
- It is believed that rodents and non-human primates could be potential reservoirs.

Does the virus mutate?

- Monkey pox virus is a DNA virus with a quite large genome of around 2,00,000 nucleotide bases.
- While being a DNA virus, the rate of mutations in the monkey pox virus is significantly lower (~1-2 mutations

per year) compared to RNA viruses like SARS-CoV-2.

THE HINDU

Taiwan

What is the Taiwan issue?

- Taiwan is an island territory located off the coast of mainland China, across the Taiwan Strait.
- After their defeat to the communist forces in the Chinese civil war (1945-1949), the ruling Kuomintang (Nationalist) government of China fled to Taiwan.
- They transplanted the Republic of China (ROC) government in Taiwan, while the Communist Party of China (CPC) established the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the mainland. Since then, the PRC considers the island as a renegade province awaiting reunification by peaceful means, if possible. Meanwhile, the ROC retained its membership at the United Nations and its permanent seat at the UN Security Council (UNSC).
- However, with the shifting geopolitics of the Cold War, the PRC and the U.S. were forced to come together in the 1970s to counter the growing influence of the USSR.

- This led to the US-China rapprochement demonstrated by the historic visit of then U.S. President Richard Nixon to PRC in 1972.
- The same year, the PRC displaced ROC as the official representative of the Chinese nation at the UN. Diplomatic relations with the PRC became possible only if countries abided by its “One China Principle” recognising PRC and not the ROC as China.

How has the U.S’s stance on the Taiwan question evolved vis-à-vis China?

- The very foundation of the U.S. rapprochement as well as its recognition of the PRC is a mutual understanding on the Taiwan question.
- This has been outlined in three documents the Shanghai Communique (1972), the Normalisation Communique (1979) and the 1982 Communique.
- According to the 1972 communique, the U.S. agreed to the ‘one China principle’, with an understanding that it “acknowledges” and “does not challenge” that “all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain that there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China.”

Why is the issue significant today?

- As Taiwan’s democracy flourished, the popular mood drifted towards a new Taiwanese identity and a pro-independence stance on sovereignty.
- The past decade has seen considerable souring of ties across the Strait, as the Democratic People’s Party (DPP) became the most powerful political force in Taiwan, sweeping two consecutive elections in the past decade.
- The DPP government, led by Tsai Ing Wen has been catering to the pro-independence constituency in Taiwan and seeks to diversify economic relations away from China. This has made China wary of Tsai.
- China has always seen Taiwan as a territory with high geopolitical significance.
- This is due to its central location in the First Island Chain between Japan and the South China Sea, which is seen as the first benchmark or barrier for China’s power projection. U.S. military outposts are scattered throughout this region, and hence, taking control of Taiwan would mean a significant breakthrough as per China’s geostrategic calculus.
- Moreover, its reunification will formally bury the remaining ghosts of China’s “century of humiliation.”

- It is also possible that the Russo-Ukraine conflict might have created a context where a strong message to the adversary becomes essential, especially considering Beijing's wearing patience and Taipei's increasingly pro-independence slant.
 - It may have reached the point where strategic ambiguity may be losing its relevance to strategic clarity.
 - However, another plausible interpretation can be that this messaging is aimed by the U.S. for eliciting responses and testing the waters to get a feel of China's game plan for the Indo-Pacific, at a time when a grand distraction is underway at the Eurasian-Atlantic theatre.
 - This may muddle the level of U.S.'s strategic ambiguity further.
- consumption of diverse food groups among adolescents was low. The fallout of COVID-19 has further worsened dietary diversity, especially of women, adolescents and children.
 - The lockdowns also led to the loss of mid-day meals and interruptions in Weekly Iron Folic Acid Supplementation (WIFS) and nutrition education in schools for adolescent girls.
 - First, along with continued service delivery of WIFS, the government's health and nutrition policies need to emphasise on strong compliance to diverse diets and physical activities
 - Second, as service delivery platforms to tap adolescents, we need to also think beyond schools, as the diverse plates are first set at home. Young girls need to be equipped with accurate information about adequate and appropriate diets so that they can act as change agents for their families, community, and peer groups.
 - Third, the adolescent's nutritional status is related to the burden of multiple micronutrient deficiencies. Currently, 80% of adolescents suffer 'hidden hunger' due to micronutrient deficiencies
 - Lastly, the POSHAN Abhiyan (now Mission POSHAN 2.0) strongly

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Dietary verification

- The National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 data (2019-20) show an increase in anaemia among adolescent girls by 5% when compared to NFHS-4.
- The Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey 2019 shows that even before the pandemic,

integrates the aspect of under-nutrition and anaemia among women, girls, and children.

THE HINDU

Net export of carbon

- The 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen witnessed a vociferous argument from countries such as India and China that developed countries who are consuming polluted goods produced elsewhere also have an obligation to clean up the mess.
- The data available from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates that India is one of the leading exporters of carbon emissions-embodied products, and that there is a steady increase in the total carbon emissions embodied in exports.
- China is the largest exporter of carbon emissions-embodied products, followed by the U.S., Russia and India.
- India's total carbon emission exports increased from 80.3 million tonnes at the time of it joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 to 426.1 million tonnes in 2018.
- The sharp increase in carbon embodied exports brought India closer to that of the U.S.'s carbon emission exports
- Net CO₂ exports can be calculated by taking the difference between carbon emissions-embodied exports and carbon emissions-embodied imports
- While India's net exports of carbon emissions were observed to be the lowest in 2007 (-11.6 million tonnes), at present the net exports are 55.4 million tonnes.
- Another way of calculating the net export of carbon emissions is by taking the difference between domestic carbon emissions embodied in gross exports and foreign carbon emissions embodied in gross exports.
- By using this definition also, there is a steady increase in net exports of carbon emissions from India.
- India's recent export performance has been attributed to petroleum products, electronics and chemicals.
- One could possibly argue that an increased GDP as a result of expansion in export revenue can be utilised for improving the environmental quality.
- As per the environmental Kuznets curve, there is an inverted U shape relationship between the income of a country and its environmental degradation.

- This implies that as income increases, environmental quality begins to deteriorate, but improves after some time.
 - Coming to the exports of agricultural and food products, India is virtually exporting some of its depleting natural resources such as water through exports.
 - India is the leading exporter of rice in the world market.
 - Given that rice is a water-intensive crop, India is indirectly exporting water to other countries.
 - This virtual water trade will have an adverse impact on long-term sustainability and food security of the country although there has been an overall improvement in water-use efficiency.
- come down from 1.38% in 2005 to 1.07% in 2019.
 - In order to ensure long-term sustainability, strict environmental measures need to be explored, such as revisiting the possibilities of increasing the environmental tax, even though the short-run implications, especially on the trade front, may not be pleasant.
 - Similarly, water-saving policies that seek to improve the water use efficiency are also the need of the hour, in order to promote sustainable production of rice and also safeguard food security in the country.

THE HINDU

Reproductive right

- The way forward**
- The growing consumption in rich countries has come at a cost for developing countries such as India. Countries have begun imposing an environmental tax to address a broad spectrum of environmental issues.
 - For example, in OECD countries, the tax roughly constitutes 2% of the GDP. While the environmental tax in India is around 1%, the tax as a percentage of GDP has marginally
- According to the World Health Organization, six out of 10 of all unintended pregnancies end in an induced abortion.
 - Around 45% of all abortions are unsafe, almost all of which (97%) take place in developing countries.
 - As per a nationally representative study published in PLOS One journal in 2014, abortions account for 10% of maternal deaths in India.
 - The recent round of the National Family Health Survey 2019-2021,

shows that 3% of all pregnancies in India result in abortion. More than half (53%) of abortions in India are performed in the private sector,

- Whereas only 20% are performed in the public sector partly because public facilities often lack abortion services.
- More than a quarter of abortions (27%) are performed by the woman herself at home.
- The MTP Act, first enacted in 1971 and then amended in 2021, certainly makes 'medical termination of pregnancy' legal in India under specific conditions
- The MTP Act also only mentions 'pregnant woman', thus failing to recognise that transgender persons and others who do not identify as women can become pregnant.
- Moreover, the acceptance of abortion in Indian society is situated in the context of population control and family planning.
- But, most importantly, after more than 50 years of the MTP Act, women and transgender persons face major obstacles in accessing safe abortion care.
- First, they may not even be aware that abortion is legal or know where to obtain one safely;
- second, since the MTP Act does not recognise abortion as a choice, they need the approval of medical professionals even in the first few weeks of the pregnancy;
- third, unmarried and transgender people continue to face stigma and can be turned away from health facilities, forcing them to resort to unsafe care;
- fourth, mandatory reporting requirements under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Bill (POCSO), 2011 law against child sexual offences, impact privacy and hinder access of adolescents to safe abortion services;
- Fifth, many are still coerced into agreeing to a permanent or long-term contraceptive method as a prerequisite for getting abortion services; sixth, health-care providers may impose their own morality by insisting on 'husbands' or 'parental' consent for abortion.
- Even women seeking abortion care in health facilities are often mistreated and not provided medications for pain relief;
- Seventh, despite laws prohibiting sex determination, the illegal practice persists.
- The mushrooming of unregulated ultrasound clinics in India continues to facilitate the illegal practice of sex determination, resulting in unsafe abortions and female foeticide.

- There is an urgent need in our country to shift the discourse on abortions from just being a family planning and maternal health issue to one of a sexual health and reproductive rights issue.
- The situation in India shows that one law alone is insufficient and we must raise the bar on reproductive justice.
- We must improve our health systems to ensure good quality and respectful abortion care.

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