



## WHO Declares Monkeypox Outbreak a Global Health Emergency



The rapidly spreading monkeypox outbreak represents a global health emergency, the World Health Organization's highest level of alert, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Saturday. The WHO label - a "public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC)" - is designed to trigger a coordinated international response and could unlock funding to collaborate on sharing vaccines and treatments.

Members of an expert committee that met on Thursday to discuss the potential recommendation were split on the decision, with nine members against and six in favour of the declaration, prompting Tedros himself to break the deadlock, he told reporters. "Although I am declaring a public health emergency of international concern, for the moment this is an outbreak that is concentrated among men who have sex with men, especially those with multiple sexual partners," Tedros told a media briefing in Geneva.

"Stigma and discrimination can be as dangerous as any virus," he added. He said the risk of monkeypox - which spreads via close contact and tends to cause flu-like symptoms and pus-filled skin lesions - was moderate globally, except in the Europe, where the WHO has deemed the risk as high.

The White House said the declaration was a "call to action for the world community to stop the spread of this virus." Raj Panjabi, director of the White House pandemic preparedness office, said a "coordinated, international response is essential" to stop the spread of the disease and protect communities at the greatest risk of contracting it.

Previously, Tedros has typically endorsed expert committee recommendations, but two sources told Reuters earlier on Saturday said he had likely decided to back the highest alert level due to concerns about escalating case rates and a short supply of vaccines and treatments. So far this year, there have been more than 16,000 cases of monkeypox in more than 75 countries, and five deaths in Africa. The viral disease has been spreading chiefly in men who have sex with men in the recent outbreak, outside Africa where it is endemic. [More](#)

Health experts welcomed the WHO's decision to issue the PHEIC declaration, which until now had only been applied to the coronavirus pandemic and ongoing efforts to eradicate polio. "The right result is clear – not declaring an emergency at this point would be a historic missed opportunity," said Lawrence Gostin, a professor at Georgetown Law in Washington, D.C., calling the decision politically brave.

The decision should help contain the spread of the viral disease, said Josie Golding, head of epidemics and epidemiology at the Wellcome Trust. "We cannot afford to keep waiting for diseases to escalate before we intervene," she said.

The WHO and national governments have been facing intense pressure from scientists and public health experts to take more action on monkeypox. Cases of the viral disease have ballooned since the committee first met at the end of June, when there were only about 3,000 cases.

At the time, the expert group agreed to reconsider their position on the emergency declaration if the outbreak escalated. One of the key issues driving a reassessment was whether cases would spread to other groups, particularly children or others who have been vulnerable to the virus in past outbreaks in endemic countries. Last week, the United States identified its first two monkeypox cases in children WHO officials said on Saturday they were exploring the possibility of the virus spreading via new modes of transmission. (Source: Reuters)

## 20 Crore Digital Health Accounts Opened, Says Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya



As many as 20 crore Indian citizens, about 15 per cent of the country's population, have opened digital health accounts under the Ayushman Digital Health Mission.

Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Friday, while replying to a debate on the private members' bill "Right to Health" Bill 2022 moved by RJD's Manoj Jha, said digital health mission was a futuristic idea.

India was moving fast towards it. "Nearly 20 crore accounts have been opened under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, which will enable everyone to have digital health accounts and end the era of medical files. Digital accounts will be OTP-protected and health data privacy will be maintained," the minister said, urging MPs to open digital accounts.

The minister, while detailing government programmes, including Ayushman Bharat, which provides for health and wellness centres and cashless and free annual hospitalisation cover of Rs 5 lakh to poor and vulnerable families, urged Jha to withdraw the Bill. Jha followed suit. The minister said of the promised 1.5 lakh health and wellness centres, 1.22 lakh had already been set up.

The minister referred to a satisfactory experience he had while recently visiting a wellness centre in Jhajjar where, he said, the attending doctor, in virtual mode, sought the opinion of a specialist doctor in PGI-Chandigarh to treat a poor patient.

"The fact that a specialist doctor from PGI saw a poor patient at a Jhajjar wellness centre through telemedicine was extremely satisfying to me as I sat watching the process from a distance," Mandaviya said. "The WHO recommends 1 doctor for every 1,000 people, we have 1 for 800 people," he added. (Source: The Tribune)

## Indian Govt To Pull 3 Types Of Codeine-Based Syrups Off the Shelf After MPs Raise Concerns



To prevent the misuse of codeine-based medicines in India, the Central government is planning to ban select preparations, News18.com learnt.

Codeine is an opioid-based analgesic, mainly used to treat coughing, pain, and diarrhoea, and it is one of the natural plant alkaloids found in extracts of opium. However, these medicines have become one of the substances for drug abuse, and these medicines, syrups are used for recreational purposes.

In the latest bid to find a solution, the government has decided to put a ban on the three different preparations of codeine – codeine with chlorpheniramine, codeine with chlorpheniramine along with menthol, and pholcodine along with promethazine. These categories include a variety of syrups including Tossex, Ascorigil C, Codistar, Planokuf, and Tedykoff.

On July 20, News18 had first reported that the government is reviewing the policy to ban the manufacturing and sale of codeine-based cough syrups after several parliamentarians raised concerns that they are being used as narcotic drugs than as a medicine.

Based on the request by several politicians to health minister Mansukh Mandaviya to ban cough syrups, the health ministry had asked the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) in March to "conduct a review and submit a recommendation".

The government's internal findings suggest that the states where the consumption of these preparations is high include Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, and Karnataka.

"The ministry is now debating on how to phase out other preparations made from codeine. For instance: the combination of codeine with triprolidine is also beneficial for TB and cancer patients," the official said.

However, the same combination – of codeine with triprolidine — is also used for manufacturing popular cough syrup brands including the top-selling Abbott's Phensydyl and Pfizer's Corex T which are abused and used for recreational purposes.

"The government may decide to phase out other combinations slowly, but steadily. We are considering the option of reducing the quota of supply of codeine to the pharma company by 20% every year," the official said, while adding that the discussions are still at a "nascent stage." (Source: News 18)

## Biden Administration To Allow New Injection Method For Monkeypox Vaccine – NYT



The Biden administration has decided to stretch out its limited supply of monkeypox vaccine by allowing a different method of injection that uses one-fifth as much per shot, the New York Times reported on Monday, citing senior officials familiar with the planning.

The United States declared monkeypox a public health emergency last week, in an effort to bolster the U.S. response to contain the outbreak. read more For U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to authorize the intradermal injection, which requires injecting one-fifth of the current dose into the skin instead of a full dose into underlying fat, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will need to issue a new emergency declaration, the report said, allowing regulators to invoke the FDA's emergency use powers.

The announcement is expected as early as Tuesday afternoon, according to the newspaper. (<https://nyti.ms/3P7QSFZ>) White House, HHS and FDA did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment. Earlier this month, Biden appointed two federal officials to coordinate his administration's response to monkeypox, following declarations of emergencies by California, Illinois and New York.

Of late more than 80 countries where monkeypox is not endemic have reported outbreaks of the viral disease, which the World Health Organization has declared a global health emergency, as confirmed cases crossed 27,800 and non-endemic countries reported their first deaths. First identified in monkeys in 1958, the disease has mild symptoms including fever, aches and pus-filled skin lesions, and people tend to recover from it within two to four weeks, the WHO says. It spreads through

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"The right result is clear – not declaring an emergency at this point would be a historic missed opportunity," said Lawrence Gostin, a professor at Georgetown Law in Washington, D.C., calling the decision politically brave. The decision should help contain the spread of the viral disease, said Josie Golding, head of epidemics and epidemiology at the Wellcome Trust. "We cannot afford to keep waiting for diseases to escalate before we intervene," she said.

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## **Bangladesh Is Rapidly Becoming A Globally Recognized Producer And Exporter of Affordable, High-Quality Generic Drugs And Medical Equipment.**

Bangladesh has made significant strides in healthcare since independence in 1971. Average life expectancy has increased from 52 to 72 years in just the last three decades, and infant and maternal mortality rates have declined through improved access to drugs and medical care. The country's expanding pharmaceutical industry produces high-quality drugs and meets 97% of domestic demand while exporting globally, including to the US, Australia, and Europe. Since the early 1980s, government policies and private sector investments have created a technologically advanced industry that has surpassed \$3 billion to become one of the leading contributors to the national treasury. The industry's sales are forecast to top \$6 billion by 2025, driven by domestic demand and exports. Bangladesh also aims to become a global supplier of high-quality, affordable drugs, medical and personal protective equipment (MPPE), and medical devices.

Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (BAPI) seeks to help its members seize new business opportunities by leveraging a highly skilled workforce and lowering production costs to carve out a sizable share of the \$400 billion global generic drugs market. Bangladesh exported medicines to more than 100 countries. Its global footprint is set to grow as the country cements its reputation as a manufacturer of affordable generic drugs with proven skills in developing hi-tech, specialized drug delivery systems.

The pharmaceutical industry is one of Bangladesh's most technologically developed sectors, with a manufacturing base of more than 200 companies making generic versions of more than 32,000 brands of medicines including: insulin, hormones, and cancer drugs. Pharmaceutical companies are Bangladesh's largest white-collar employers and are investing in technology and skills development to increase exports. The country's new API Park provides backward integration through large-scale production of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), which will help make Bangladesh competitive in the \$400 billion generic drugs market by saving 70% of the cost of imported raw materials.

"Bangladesh has a very vibrant and forward-looking pharmaceutical industry," says Hassan. "It's a success story built largely on the sheer commitment of our member companies who have created a strong platform for us." Supportive government policies and private sector investments have helped Bangladesh's pharma industry's sales grow from \$20 million in the early 1980s to more than \$3 billion currently and are forecast to double by 2025 as it ramps up exports. Government policies to attract foreign direct investment along with a sizable talent pool and some of the world's lowest production costs have made it attractive for multinational drugmakers to set up manufacturing facilities in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) allows Bangladesh to enjoy patent waivers, enabling manufacturers to realize the industry's potential while keeping medicine prices affordable.

When the Covid-19 pandemic created an unprecedented global MPPE shortage, Bangladeshi companies stepped up to the challenge by ramping up production. They exported equipment, including face masks, medical gowns, and gloves worth \$11.58 million during the July-May period of 2020. BEXIMCO Health alone shipped 6.5 million medical gowns to the US Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Within a short period, BEXIMCO Health built a new facility with a clean room and testing lab on the group's 20-acre campus. Previously, advanced MPPE testing facilities were limited in Bangladesh, so BEXIMCO formed a strategic partnership with Intertek UK to create an on-site laboratory. Its Center of Excellence PPE Lab conducts physical, chemical, and microbiological testing, enabling BEXIMCO to quickly obtain PPE certifications.

Domestic production capabilities have resulted in imports of MPPE and medical devices declining while exports have surged. In December 2021, Bangladesh's government pledged its full support to the MPPE and medical device industry to facilitate export diversification and deeper industrialization, with Tapan Kanti Ghosh, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce saying "The country needs to develop the MPPE industry in a strategic manner by setting targets, expanding right kinds of incentives, ensuring public-private cooperation and following up closely on the progress and constraints."

Bangladesh's medical sector responded swiftly to deal with the pandemic. From just nine dedicated Covid hospitals in April 2020, the country now has 100 government and 39 private hospitals treating patients. Intensive care unit (ICU) beds have also increased, from just 100 in June 2020 to 1,321 ICU and 856 high dependency unit (HDU) beds dedicated to treating Covid today. Liquid oxygen tanks have also been installed in Covid hospitals to ensure uninterrupted supply through central pipelines. Hospitals have increased their capacity to deliver oxygen from central tanks, cylinders, and concentrators. In addition to companies ramping up production of MPPE and medical devices, BEXIMCO also supplies free Covid-19 medicines to government hospitals.

Bangladesh's pharmaceutical industry has seen annual growth of 15.6% over the past five years. Based on their proven track record of partnerships with global drugmakers, top Bangladeshi pharma companies have been included in the United Nations-backed Medicines Patent Pool as part of a global initiative to produce critical Covid-19 drugs under licensing arrangements.

"As we continue to upgrade our capabilities with our manufacturing platform benchmarked to global standards, I believe, with all our concerted efforts, we will be able to achieve our national aspiration of becoming an important generic drugs hub in the region," says Nazmul Hassan, President, BAPI. (Source: CNN)