

## 1. Turmoil at OpenAI: Unraveling the Boardroom Drama

### Introduction

The recent upheaval at OpenAI involving the ousting and subsequent reinstatement of CEO Sam Altman has raised questions about the view points behind growth of Artificial intelligence.

### OpenAI's Mission and Structure

OpenAI, founded in 2015 as a non-profit organization, aimed to advance artificial intelligence research for the benefit of humanity. However, financial challenges arose, leading to the creation of a for-profit wing in 2019 under Altman's leadership. This for-profit venture, responsible for consumer AI technology like ChatGPT, operated alongside the non-profit arm, causing internal tensions.

### Financial Struggles and For-Profit Ventures

Facing financial constraints, OpenAI's move towards monetizable AI technology resulted in conflicts between its non-profit roots and the necessity for substantial financial investment. The launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 further intensified these conflicts.

### Microsoft's Role and Investment

Microsoft's significant investment in OpenAI, totaling up to \$13 billion, played a pivotal role in the company's growth. However, the board's attempt to oust Altman took Microsoft by surprise, prompting CEO Satya Nadella to express support for Altman's reinstatement.

### Employee Loyalty and Microsoft's Ultimatum

OpenAI employees, alarmed by the sudden changes, threatened to leave if Altman and other key figures were not reinstated. Microsoft, keen on retaining talent and its partnership with OpenAI, announced plans to hire Altman and others to run an AI research center within Microsoft if they were not brought back.

### Internal Board Divisions and Reconstitution

Internal divisions within the board, with co-founder Illya Sutskever expressing regret for his role in the turmoil, contributed to the board's decision to reinstate Altman as CEO. The reconstitution of the board followed, with most coup instigators resigning, signaling a shift in OpenAI's leadership.

### The Influence of 'Effective Altruism'

While it may seem like a place led solely by money and technology, Silicon Valley also has its philosophies, a key one being 'effective altruism'. Simply put, effective altruism looks at ways in which any intervention, monetary or technical, can be most effective. The practitioners of this philosophy among the Silicon Valley elite have an obsession with the possible negative impacts of AI and reducing the risk associated with it. OpenAI's charter itself speaks of safely building an AGI, or Artificial General Intelligence, an AI capable of reasoning like humans unlike the generative AIs that we have that only create based on what it has 'learned'.

Effective Altruists tend to push back against the 'techno optimists' and 'accelerationists', who believe that the benefits of technology outweigh the bad and that all technological developments need to be accelerated as it is the way forward for mankind. The effective altruism proponents on OpenAI's board seem to have been spooked by the rapid commercialisation of the company and feared that it was deviating from its original purpose, playing into the hands of accelerationists. They may have been trying to recapture the narrative but bungled up the effort.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; S & T

Source: The Hindu

## **2. What does the WHO report state on Measles and how has the Union Health Ministry responded?**

### **Introduction**

A new report from the World Health Organization and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said measles cases in 2022 have increased by 18%, and deaths by 43% globally, compared to 2021. This, the report states, takes the estimated number of measles cases to nine million and deaths to 1,36,000, mostly among children. The Union Health Ministry has refuted a part of the report which said that globally 22 million children did not get their first measles shot in 2022 and that half of them live in 10 countries including India, where an estimated 1.1 million infants did not get the first dose of the vaccine. India's Universal Immunisation Programme is one of the largest public health programmes in the world targeting close to 2.67 crore newborns and 2.9 crore pregnant women annually.

### **What is the Union Health Ministry saying?**

The Health Ministry maintains that just over 21,000 Indian children did not get the shot and said that the WHO data is based on an estimated number. It added that 21,310 children missed their first dose in 2022-23; and that initiatives have been undertaken by the Centre in coordination with the States to ensure that all children receive all missed/due doses of the measles vaccine.

What is measles?

Measles is a contagious disease caused by a virus, which spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Measles starts with a cough, runny nose, red eyes, and fever. Then a rash of tiny, red spots break out. It starts at the head and spreads to the rest of the body. According to the WHO, measles vaccination averted 56 million deaths between 2000 and 2021.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on the vaccination programme**

Measles can be prevented with the MMR vaccine. The vaccine protects against three diseases — measles, mumps and rubella. Two doses of MMR vaccine are about 97% effective at preventing measles; one dose is about 93% effective. This viral disease affecting mainly children causes significant morbidity and mortality. In an unimmunised population, the disease can rapidly break into an epidemic.

Three doses are recommended at 9 months, 15 months and one dose through 4 to 6 years. Due to interruption of routine vaccination during and post-COVID pandemic, India did see several outbreaks of measles in different parts of the country.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

## **3. Mysterious pneumonia outbreak in China**

### **Introduction**

Evoking feelings of déjà vu among people across the world, China is seeing a spike in respiratory illnesses as it enters its first full winter season after lifting Covid-19 restrictions last December.

Here is what we know about the situation so far.

#### **1. So, what exactly is happening?**

There has been a spike in reported incidents of respiratory illnesses in China. First reported by China's National Health Commission on November 13, the illnesses have caused a surge in hospitalisations, with many hospitals warning of long waits. The situation came into the spotlight this week when the WHO asked China for more information, citing a report by the Program for Monitoring Emerging Diseases (ProMED) on clusters of undiagnosed pneumonia in children.

#### **2. Where is this spike occurring?**

Infections have proliferated across China's north-eastern regions, with Beijing and Liaoning, 800 km apart, being two major hubs.

#### **3. Who have been most affected by the outbreak?**

Cases among children are especially high, with children making up a large proportion of those hospitalised. Schools in Beijing are reporting high levels of absenteeism, even dismissing entire classes for at least a week if some students are ill.

Some experts have noted that the high incidence in children is actually a positive, indicating that older individuals have some immunity to the pathogens running rampant. This would most likely mean that existing vaccines are likely to help protect individuals from disease. However, apart from children, the elderly and pregnant women may also be vulnerable.

#### **4. Is this the outbreak of a new disease, like Covid-19 a few years back?**

No, not as far as we know yet. Chinese authorities have attributed the increase in incidence of respiratory illnesses to the circulation of known pathogens such as influenza, mycoplasma pneumoniae, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). So far, no new illness has been identified, although the World Health Organization has asked China for more disease data.

According to WHO, mycoplasma pneumoniae, a common bacterial infection which typically affects younger children, is likely to be what is affecting most of the patients under 18.

#### **5. Why this outbreak now?**

Chinese authorities, and many health experts elsewhere, have attributed the outbreak to the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, similar to “lockdown exit waves” seen in other countries. China may be repaying an “immunity debt” after their strict and lengthy lockdown, which must have drastically reduced the circulation of respiratory bugs and hence decreased immunity to endemic bugs.

Moreover, the onset of winter is a likely culprit as well. Chinese authorities have said that temperatures will further plummet this weekend onwards.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: The Indian Express