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Health Ministry reviews Nipah Virus cases in Kerala

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The Ministry has mobilized a public health team from NCDC Branch Kozhikode to assess the extent of problem, for risk assessment and risk management.



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The Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, J P Nadda is closely monitoring the situation arising out of reported cases and deaths due to Nipah Virus in Kerala. He has reviewed it with Secretary (HFW) Preeti Sudan and DG (ICMR) Dr. Balram Bhargava and has directed for all support to be extended to Kerala in its prevention and management.

Following directions of the Union Health Minister, a multi-disciplinary Central team from National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) is presently in Kerala constantly reviewing the situation. The Central team includes Dr.Sujeet K Sing, Director, NCDC; Dr. S K Jain, Head Epidemiology, NCDC; Dr. P Ravindran, Director, Emergency Medical Relief (EMR);Dr Naveen Gupta, Head Zoonosis, NCDC; Dr Ashutosh Biswas, Prof Internal Medicine, AIIMS; Dr. Deepak Bhattacharya, Pulmonologist, Safdarjung Hospital along with two clinicians and one expert from Ministry of Animal Husbandry.

The NCDC team visited the house in Perambra from where the initial death was reported. The team found many bats housed in the well from where the family was drawing water. Some bats have been caught and have been sent for lab examination to confirm whether they are the cause of the disease or not. 60 different samples have been collected from the spot and sent for examination. There are two confirmed cases with history of contact with the index case. They were admitted in the Calicut Medical College Hospital and died due to Nipah virus.

The Ministry has mobilized a public health team from NCDC Branch Kozhikode to assess the extent of problem, for risk assessment and risk management. They are assisting the State Level Team already deployed at the epicentre. So far, seven patients have been admitted in Baby Memorial Hospital and in the Govt. Medical College at Kozhikode and at the Amrutha Medical College, Ernakulum.

Nadda has urged citizens not to believe in rumours posted on social media and not to spread panic.

The field team has advised hospitals to follow intracranial pressure (ICP) guidelines, use personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers and sample collection; assist in enhancing active fever surveillance in the community; strengthen contact tracing in close contacts of cases, relatives, health care workers; ensure isolation facilities, ventilator support and hospital infection control practices; and coordinate with animal sector and enhance surveillance for unusual illness and deaths in animals.

The Ministry has ensured availability of diagnostic kits, personal protective equipment and risk communication materials. High quality personal protection equipment has been provided to health care personnel. A total of nine individuals are currently under treatment. Isolation wards have been opened in many hospitals in Kozhikode. Hospitals in public and private sector have been provided with personal protective equipment. Appropriate steps to contain this virus have been taken among domestic animals such as pigs. Since all the contacts are under observation and steps to avoid exposure through animal vectors have been taken there is no reason for people to panic. This appears to be a localisedoccurrence.

With early and efficient containment measures undertaken jointly by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Government of Kerala, the outbreak is unlikely to spread. The Virus Research Diagnostic Laboratory at Manipal Hospital and the National Institute of Virology, apremier institute for research in virology, are geared up to meet any diagnostic challenges that may arise.