

Nipah virus scare: Nadda says no cause for panic as situation under control

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New Delhi: The death toll in the deadly Nipah virus outbreak has risen to ten. While the Kozhikode in Kerala is worst affected, many fear that the virus might spread to other regions such as Goa and Mumbai.

However, the Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Mr J P Nadda who is closely monitoring the situation arising out of reported cases and deaths, has stated that the situation is under control.

“With early and efficient containment measures undertaken jointly by the Ministry of Health and 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, a premier institute for research in virology, are geared up to meet any diagnostic challenges

that may arise,” the statement from union health ministry mentioned.

Mr J P Nadda reviewed the situation with Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, Ms Preeti Sudan and Director General, Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), Dr Balram Bhargava, and directed for all support to be extended to Kerala in its prevention and management.

The health minister has also urged the citizens in Kerala and the rest of the country not to believe in rumors posted on social media and not to spread panic.

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.

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 said it 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. Isolation wards have been opened in many hospitals in Kozhikode. Hospitals in public and private sector have been provided with personal protective equipment,” the statement read further.

While calling it a localized occurrence, Ministry stated that the 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,” it said.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) is in contact with government officials in the affected areas, as per Henk Bekedam, its India representative.