NIPAH OUTBREAK

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Health officials at the District Nipah Control Cell opened at the Government Guest House in Kozhikode on September 13, 2023. | Photo Credit: Thulasi Kakkat

A day after Nipah infection was confirmed for the third time in Kozhikode district in Kerala, the number of cases rose to five as a healthcare worker from a private hospital, tested positive on Wednesday. The State Health Department prepared a contact list of 789 people, linked to the two persons who lost their lives due to the infection, and two others under treatment after testing positive for the virus.

The department also released a 'route map' of the two deceased persons detailing their travel history from the day they developed symptoms. The government has restricted big events in Kozhikode till September 24.

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) is expected to provide monoclonal antibodies for the treatment of the infected persons by Thursday morning.

Kerala Health Minister Veena George earlier told the media in Thiruvananthapuram that the cases belonged to the Bangladesh strain, which was comparatively less infectious, but had a high mortality rate of 70%.

According to official sources, 371 contacts of the first victim, a 47-year-old man from Maruthonkara in Kozhikode, are under medical surveillance. Sixty contacts of his nine-year-old son, who is undergoing treatment at a private hospital in the city, too have been traced. One of his brothers-in-law, a 24-year-old man, has 77 contacts. The health worker who tested positive on Wednesday too was on his contact list. Another health worker on the list tested negative for the virus.

The contact list of the second victim, a 40-year-old man from Ayancheri, has 281 persons. The condition of the infected persons are reported to be stable. A majority of those on the contact list are under isolation at their homes.

The department has sent 11 more body-fluid samples of suspected patients for lab tests at the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune. Currently, 20 people are under medical observation: 13 at the isolation ward set up at the Government Medical College Hospital, Kozhikode, and seven others at a private hospital in the city.

An expert panel of doctors has reportedly said that the 47-year-old victim can be considered as the index patient, from whom the others got infected. The second victim had come in contact with him at a private hospital in the city where the former was undergoing treatment. The first patient died on August 30 and the second patient on September 11.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan earlier held a meeting of Ministers and top government officials to assess the situation. A fever survey conducted by health volunteers covered 313 houses in the affected areas on Wednesday. Nine gram panchayats have been declared as containment zones in the district.

Ms. George said that a State-level control room had been set up at the Directorate of Health Sciences. She said that a mobile lab to be set up by the ICMR would be functional at the medical college hospital by Thursday afternoon for speeding up the lab tests of the samples collected from suspected patients. She also said a team from the NIV would carry out a bat survey. Another team of epidemiologists from Chennai would also arrive in the State to carry out studies.

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