

ICMR NOD TO CONDUCT TRUENAT TEST TO DETECT NIPAH

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Thiruvananthapuram

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A teacher conducts an online class at a school in Kozhikode on Tuesday after local authorities closed all educational institutions in the district following an outbreak of Nipah. | Photo Credit: -

Kerala has been accorded sanction by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) to use Truenat test to diagnose Nipah. Hospitals with BSL 2 level labs can perform the test. The standard operating procedure for the same will be prepared, Health Minister Veena George has said.

This means that NiV diagnostics can be performed by more labs in the State. Samples found to be positive for NiV through Truenat can be sent to the labs in Kozhikode or Thiruvananthapuram Medical College Hospitals or to Institute of Advanced Virology in the capital, she said, while addressing the media here on Wednesday.

The State was able to contain Nipah effectively and limit its spread because of the efficient work done by the Kozhikode district surveillance team right from beginning to identify the index case in this outbreak, she said.

No new cases of Nipah have been reported since. Four people who tested to be positive continue to be under treatment, including the nine-year-old who happens to be the child of the deceased index case. The child's condition has improved further and he is no longer on oxygen support. The other three people are also making a good recovery, Ms. George said.

Of the 323 samples tested for Nipah so far, 317 have been found to be negative. Till now, six cases have been found to be positive, including two deaths. A total of 980 persons on the contact list are under isolation now, including 11 who have been isolated at the Kozhikode MCH.

The Health department will conduct a serosurveillance study amongst those included in the high risk contacts to learn more about the disease epidemiology.

The State will focus on evolving a long-term surveillance strategy for Nipah. Already 81 samples had been tested this year after suspecting NiV. Nipah surveillance is part of the State's Aarogya Jagratha calendar and training has been given to healthcare workers as part of the Nipah protocol, she said.

Though the incubation period is 21 days, the State will observe another 21-day period when surveillance measures will be in full swing. The control room will thus function for 42 days. Measures are being taken to strengthen activities under One Health initiative, involving other related departments, she added.

Principal Secretary (Health), Mohammed Hanish, was also present at the press conference.

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