

Two new MERS deaths in Saudi: ministry

July 7 2013

A Saudi man and a child have died from the MERS virus, bringing the number of deaths from the respiratory infection in the kingdom to 38, the health ministry said on Sunday.

The 53-year-old man died from the SARS-like illness in Eastern Province, where the illness first broke out last year, the ministry's website reported.

The second victim was a two-year-old boy in the Red Sea city of Jeddah, it added.

It also reported three new confirmed MERS infections, two men in Riyadh aged 66 and 69, and a foreign employee in the health sector in Hafr al-Batin in the east.

The new cases bring the number of confirmed MERS infections in Saudi Arabia to 65 since the outbreak began.

The World Health Organisation announced on Friday it had convened emergency talks on the MERS virus, which is striking hardest in Saudi Arabia.

The move came amid concern about the potential impact of October's hajj pilgrimage, when millions of Muslims from around the globe head to and from Saudi Arabia.

The WHO has not recommended any MERS-related travel restrictions,

but says countries should monitor unusual [respiratory infection](#) patterns.

The first recorded MERS death was in June last year in Saudi Arabia.

Experts are struggling to understand MERS, short for Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus.

It shares the flu-like symptoms of its cousin SARS, or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, but differs in that it also causes [kidney failure](#).

Like SARS, MERS is thought to have jumped from animals to humans.

It seems deadliest for older men who already have other medical conditions, and can spread between humans, but so far appears far less contagious than SARS.

There have been cases in Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, while Britain, France, Italy, Tunisia and Britain have recorded transmission to patients who did not travel to the Middle East but had close contact with people who did.

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