

Kuwait reports second MERS virus case

November 14 2013

Kuwait has reported its second case of the deadly MERS coronavirus for a man who just returned from abroad, the health ministry said.

In a statement cited by the official KUNA agency late Wednesday, the ministry said the new case was for a 52-year-old Kuwaiti national who was in a stable condition.

Media reports said the patient had just returned from a visit to neighbouring Saudi Arabia.

The announcement came hours after Kuwait reported its first case of the MERS virus for a 47-year-old Kuwaiti man who was in critical condition.

Kuwait is now the fifth state in the Gulf to report the disease.

The ministry said the latest case was not related to the first patient and both have been isolated at the country's Infectious Diseases Hospital. Relatives of the two patients had also been examined.

The World Health Organisation said on its website on Monday that it has been informed of 153 laboratory-confirmed MERS cases worldwide so far, including the 64 deaths, a majority of them in Saudi Arabia with two fatalities in Oman and Qatar.

Experts are struggling to understand the disease, for which there is no vaccine.

It is considered a deadlier but less-transmissible cousin of the SARS virus that erupted in Asia in 2003 and infected 8,273 people, nine percent of whom died.

Like SARS, MERS appears to cause a lung infection, with patients suffering from a temperature, coughing and breathing difficulties.

But it differs in that it also causes rapid kidney failure, and the extremely high death rate has caused serious concern.

In August, researchers pointed to Arabian camels as possible hosts of the virus.

And the Saudi government said on Monday that a camel in the kingdom has tested positive for MERS, the first case of an animal infected with the coronavirus.

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