

'Sporadic' MERS cases in Saudi: health ministry

October 16 2014

Saudi Arabia is seeing "sporadic" cases of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), which has killed 324 people in the country, the health ministry said Thursday.

The kingdom has been hardest hit by MERS, which has also appeared in about 20 other nations.

The ministry said it has recorded "sporadic cases of MERS-CoV around the kingdom" and reiterated the need for precautions to help prevent the virus from spreading.

From June 2012 the ministry has recorded 763 people contracting MERS, 429 of which have recovered. Ten are listed as "active".

Data reported on the ministry's website show only one MERS death from July 11 to September 24.

Since then three Saudis have died, with the latest reported on October 7.

Research by Saudi scientists indicates that camels play a role in the transmission of the virus to humans.

In June, the World Health Organisation said a surge in MERS cases had receded but countries should remain vigilant ahead of pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia.

The kingdom engaged thousands of health workers to ensure the two million pilgrims who visited earlier this month for the annual Muslim hajj were protected from MERS and another deadly [virus](#), Ebola.

On Tuesday the WHO said no new MERS cases have been linked to the hajj.

Acting Health Minister Adel Fakieh also has said the hajj was "free of all epidemic diseases."

The ministry stressed "the importance of practises such as washing hands frequently, avoiding contact with patients, avoiding the touching of eyes or noses, using tissues to cover mouths when coughing, avoiding contact with camels that are demonstrating symptoms".

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