

Tests rule out MERS in Czech tour guide (Update)

July 3 2015

Tests have ruled out the potentially fatal MERS virus in a Czech tour guide hospitalised in Prague, the health minister said Friday.

"Based on laboratory tests on the patient... I can definitely confirm the disease was not MERS," Svatopluk Nemecek told reporters without elaborating.

The 33-year-old tour guide spent a week in May in South Korea, where the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) has killed 33 people out of the 184 diagnosed since the latest outbreak in late May.

The man fell ill on Thursday while leading a coach trip to Poland and was taken to a specialised Prague hospital with a fever while almost 50 fellow passengers were put in quarantine in eastern Czech Republic.

"There is no reason to hold them any further," chief public health officer Vladimir Valenta told the Czech news agency CTK.

In Europe last month the virus killed a 65-year-old German man who contracted MERS during a trip to Abu Dhabi.

Globally, some 1,300 people have been infected with MERS—mostly in Saudi Arabia—and more than 400 have died since the virus first emerged in 2012, having spread to 26 countries.

MERS is considered a deadlier cousin of Severe Acute Respiratory

Syndrome (SARS), which appeared in 2003 and killed more than 800 people around the world.

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