

Park in Indian capital shut after suspected bird flu deaths

October 21 2016, by Nirmala George



A peacock crosses a pathway as a park worker rides a bicycle inside the closed Deer park in New Delhi, India, Friday, Oct. 21, 2016. City authorities have closed a sprawling park in the heart of New Delhi after eight birds died of suspected bird flu, days after the city zoo was closed to the public after nine birds died there. (AP Photo/Altaf Qadri)

City authorities have closed a sprawling park in the heart of New Delhi after eight birds died of suspected bird flu, days after the city zoo was closed to the public after nine birds died there.

New Delhi's Development Minister Gopal Rai said Friday that eight bird deaths were reported to city authorities on Thursday. These included two more bird deaths in the Delhi Zoo and two dead birds found in the Hauz Khas Deer Park.

City officials said three dead crows were also found in a residential neighborhood near the zoo. Autopsies were planned on all the dead birds.

The zoo was closed to the public Tuesday after autopsies confirmed at least three birds had died from H5N1 avian influenza.

Rai said autopsy results of the birds that died Thursday were not known yet but the government was taking the precaution of closing the park.

H5N1 poses no apparent threat to humans, but highly pathogenic strains can be deadly to domestic poultry and, rarely, wild birds.

Delhi's Hauz Khas Deer Park is home to hundreds of deer, peacocks and other birds. Described as one of the few "green lungs" of the highly polluted capital, the park is popular with joggers and walkers.

At this time of the year, bird sanctuaries, wildlife parks and water bodies around northern India are crowded with migratory birds flying south for the winter.



A closure notice and a bird flu news report from a Hindi newspaper are seen hanging at the entry gates of the Deer park in New Delhi, India, Friday, Oct. 21, 2016. City authorities have closed a sprawling park in the heart of New Delhi after eight birds died of suspected bird flu, days after the city zoo was closed to the public after nine birds died there. (AP Photo/Altaf Qadri)

Rai said vacations had been canceled for all employees of the city's animal husbandry department in case more dead birds are found.

Animal health officials visited the capital's main poultry markets and took samples from different batches of chickens brought for sale.

"We are closely monitoring bird sanctuaries, poultry farms and chicken wholesale markets," Rai said.

Meanwhile, 15 storks have died over the past three days in a zoo in the central Indian city of Gwalior. Zoo official Pradeep Srivastava said zoo

authorities were waiting for the autopsy reports on the painted storks to determine if avian influenza was present before deciding whether or not to shut the zoo.



A roadside fast-food vendor tends to his business near the closed entry gates of the Deer park in New Delhi, India, Friday, Oct. 21, 2016. City authorities have closed a sprawling park in the heart of New Delhi after eight birds died of suspected bird flu, days after the city zoo was closed to the public after nine birds died there. (AP Photo/Altaf Qadri)



Visitors read closure notice pasted on to the entry gate of the Deer park in New Delhi, India, Friday, Oct. 21, 2016. City authorities have closed a sprawling park in the heart of New Delhi after eight birds died of suspected bird flu, days after the city zoo was closed to the public after nine birds died there. (AP Photo/Altaf Qadri)

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