

Rare Nipah virus claims fourth family member in India

May 24 2018

A fourth member of the same Indian family has died from the rare Nipah virus, officials said Thursday, as authorities scramble to contain an outbreak that has claimed 11 lives.

V. Moosa, who died Thursday in a hospital in the southwest state of Kerala, had two sons and a sister-in-law succumb to the same deadly infection spread by [fruit bats](#) last week.

"He was on ventilator support for a week and died today morning," Kerala state health director Sarita R. L. told AFP of Moosa, 60.

Dead bats were found in a well at their home in Kozhikode district—the epicentre of the viral outbreak that has authorities on high alert.

A nurse who treated one of Moosa's sons also died, leaving a heart-wrenching note for her family.

"Each and every person who was in contact with any suspected patient is being monitored," Sarita said.

Two other confirmed cases of Nipah virus have been detected and the patients are being treated in hospital, she said.

It was unclear whether these patients came into contact with Moosa's family or contracted it elsewhere.

Officials suspect the zoonosis infection outbreak—that causes disease in both animals and humans—spread from the unused well at Moosa's home where the dead bats were found.

Dozens of other suspected patients were being quarantined and many more monitored by health officials in at least four districts in the state.

Two other patients were in isolation in neighbouring Karnataka state after developing symptoms similar to Nipah upon returning from Kerala.

Rajeshwari Devi, a health official in the Karnataka city of Mangalore, told AFP the [patients'](#) condition was improving but doctors were awaiting the results of blood tests.

Authorities have issued a travel advisory for half a dozen districts in Kerala and alerts in neighbouring [states](#) to try to curb the spread of the [deadly virus](#).

Nipah has killed more than 260 people in Malaysia, Bangladesh and India since 1998 and has a mortality rate of nearly 70 percent, according to the World Health Organization.

In India the disease was first reported in eastern West Bengal state in 2001.

There is no vaccination for the virus which induces flu-like symptoms that lead to an agonising encephalitis and coma.

The WHO has named Nipah as one of the eight priority diseases that could cause a global epidemic, alongside Ebola and Zika.

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