

Nipah breaks out again in Kerala, claims 2 lives

Two more infected with the virus in Kozhikode; district put on high alert; Centre sends expert team for assistance; State government opens control room, steps up surveillance, contact tracing

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE/NEW DELHI

Nipah scare returned to Kerala, with two deaths from the viral infection being reported from Kozhikode district.

Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya confirmed the deaths on Tuesday. Two more cases of the virus – transmitted from animals, such as bats or pigs, to humans and from human to human – have been confirmed.

The deaths of the two patients – aged 44 and 40 – were reported on August 30 and September 11, respectively. The nine-year-old child of the second patient and his 24-year-old relative are under treatment. The condition of the child is stated to be critical.



Warning signs: People wear masks at a medical college in Kerala's Kozhikode after the district was put on Nipah alert on Tuesday. PTI

The samples were tested at the National Institute of Virology, Pune.

A Central team of four experts has been sent to Kerala to assist the State government in surveillance and reduction in response time, Dr. Mandaviya said. The government medical colleges in Kerala were issued guidelines on

the precautions to be taken and provided with protective kits, he said. "This isn't a new virus, and we have some experience with this," he said. Deaths due to Nipah were reported in the district in 2018 and 2021. The symptoms of Nipah are fever, muscle pain, and respiratory problems. An infected person can be

asymptomatic, but can be a carrier of Nipah.

Asked if India is looking at importing drugs to treat the patients, the Minister said "no such need has presented itself as of now". "The patients are being managed well but in case there is any requirement we will definitely look into it," he said.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, in a social media post, said there was no need to worry as most of those who were in close contact with the deceased were under treatment.

The Health Department has sounded an alert in the district. A control room has been set up and people have been advised to wear masks.

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EVA STALIN IAS ACADEMY - BEST IAS COACHING IN CHENNAI

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Earlier in the day, State Health Minister Veena George who reached the district, chaired a high-level meeting to evaluate the situation and said all precautionary steps are in place.

The State Health Department formed core committees for surveillance, sample testing and research management, contact tracing, and patient transportation management, among others.

The department has prepared a contact list of 168 persons. Of them, 158 are linked to the first patient and 10 are connected to the second patient. The Minister said a fever survey was being undertaken in Maruthonkara and Ayancheri gram panchayats, from where the two deceased hail from. An isolation ward with 75 beds has been readied at the Government Medical College Hospital in Kozhikode.

A bat habitat survey too is being planned in association with the departments of Forests and Wild Life and Animal Husbandry.

An expert team from the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, and the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) are expected to reach Kozhikode on Wednesday. The NIV team will also set up a bio-safety level-3 mobile lab to enable testing of samples of suspected patients. The ICMR team will conduct an epidemiological investigation into the genesis of the infection too.

"Hospitals and the health workers have been instructed to follow the infection control protocol," said Ms. George while advising people to avoid unnecessary hospital visits.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Nipah has a relatively high case fatality ratio.

"Nipah virus infection can be transmitted through contaminated food or directly from person to person," WHO noted.

(With PTI inputs)

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NGT forms panel to simplify and enforce guidelines for Vinayaka idols' immersion

Order follows a petition in the tribunal that sought prohibition of immersion in waterbodies and a direction to create artificial ponds, in compliance with the CPCB guidelines, for the purpose

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

The Southern Bench of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has formed a committee, headed by Additional Chief Secretary, Departments of Environment, Climate Change and Forests, to simplify guidelines for idol immersion during *Vinayaka Chaturthi* in consonance with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) guidelines and enforce them in all districts.

A petition filed by a resident of Chennai, Hariharan, in the tribunal sought prohibition of immersion of idols in waterbodies to avoid contamination and a direction to create artificial ponds for immersion in compliance with the guidelines of the CPCB.

In its 'Revised Guidelines for Idol Immersion', the CPCB states that as far as possible, idol immersion shall be encouraged only at designated artificial confined tanks.

"In cases where immersion in rivers, lakes and ponds is inevitable, arrangements



In its revised guidelines, CPCB states that as far as possible, immersion of Vinayaka idols shall be encouraged only at designated artificial confined tanks. E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

may be made for construction of temporary confined areas of adequate capacity at designated places with earthen bunds, at least 50 m away from the waterbody," it said.

Noting that there was already an application against contamination of the Samalapuram lake in Tiruppur over idol immersion, the Bench – comprising Justice Pushpa Sathyanarayana and expert member Satyagopal Kolarpati – said that when idols were immersed in artificial

lakes, the remnants could be collected and disposed of. However, when they are immersed in waterbodies, they float away or get washed ashore.

The NGT Bench observed that the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court had already passed an order to incorporate the revised guidelines of the CPCB, and that the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) had sent a communication to the district authorities asking them to follow the guide-

lines. But to ensure that they were implemented, the Bench ordered that a committee comprising Secretary, Public Department; Additional Chief Secretary, Revenue Administration; and Chairman, TNPCB, be constituted.

"As the festival is fast approaching and in Tamil Nadu, it is already proposed that it will be celebrated on September 18, 2023, let the authorities take the necessary action in this regard," it said.

Population of donkeys declining drastically in Tamil Nadu, they will become extinct if no conservation efforts are made: experts

B. Kolappan
CHENNAI

Donkeys, our "beasts of burden", are capable of carrying loads much heavier than their own body weight and can traverse terrains inaccessible to other modes of transport. Their milk, believed to have medicinal value, is one of the most sought-after ingredients for certain cosmetic products. But their population in Tamil Nadu is declining drastically and the animals may even die out in the State if no conservation efforts are taken, say experts.

"Mechanisation is the main reason behind the services of donkeys becoming redundant. For instance, washermen, who used the animal to carry soiled clothes to ponds/rivers and then carry the laundered clothes back to customers' homes, have now opted for motor vehicles..." said veterinarian S. Ganesh Kumar, who is studying the animals for his doctoral thesis *Performance and Welfare Assessment of Donkeys in the Southern Agro Climatic Zone*. According to a 2012 census, there were 9,183 donkeys in Tamil Nadu,



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Earlier, donkeys were also used for carrying river sand. When there was a

ban on sand mining, donkey-owners faced harassment from the police and other authorities and most of them sold their animals to escape the harassment, Mr. Kumar said.

Some establishments, including a farm in Mukkudal in Tirunelveli district, keep the animals and sell their milk to pharmaceutical companies or local residents. But they are few and far between. "The lysozyme content in donkey milk is very high and is believed to be good for gut health. However, we need more research to establish its real effect on gut

health," said N. Kumaravelu, Dean, College of Food and Dairy Technology, who is also Mr. Ganesh Kumar's research guide.

Across the world, beauty products that use donkey milk as an ingredient are popular. In many parts of Tamil Nadu, the dung of donkeys is placed in septic tanks as it has a high level of microorganisms and prevents tanks from overflowing. Donkeys are sure-footed animals and would not tip over while carrying weights. "The Election Commission of India still uses them to carry ballot boxes to remote areas

where motor vehicles cannot reach. They can also be of immense help in farms with drip-irrigation facilities to carry manure and other products..." Mr. Kumar said.

Dr. Kumaravelu said there was a need to put an end to the practice of breeding Tamil Nadu donkeys with those from other States. "The donkeys in Tamil Nadu are dark grey in colour with the mark of a cross on their back. Now, owners cross-breed them with donkeys from other States. This may result in the extinction of the local species," he said.

Rajnath lays foundation stone for Nyoma airfield near the LAC in eastern Ladakh

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday virtually laid the foundation stone for the Nyoma airfield in eastern Ladakh near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and also inaugurated the crucial Nechiphu tunnel on the axis to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.

In all, he inaugurated 90 infrastructure projects built by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) at a cost of over ₹2,900 crore, across 11 States and Union Territories, which include two revamped airfields in Bagdogra and Barrackpore in West Bengal, two helipads, 22 roads and 63 bridges.

Of these 90 projects, 36 are in Arunachal Pradesh; 26 in Ladakh; 11 in Jammu



Rajnath Singh inaugurating the Devak Bridge, which is constructed by the BRO in Jammu on Tuesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

& Kashmir; five in Mizoram; three in Himachal Pradesh; two each in Sikkim, Uttarakhand and West Bengal; and one each in Nagaland, Rajasthan and Andaman & Nicobar Islands, a Defence Ministry statement said.

"The Nyoma airfield, to be developed at a cost of approximately ₹200 crore, will boost air infrastructure in Ladakh and aug-

ment the IAF's capability along the northern border. The Defence Minister exuded confidence that the airfield, which will be one of the world's highest, would prove to be a game-changer for the armed forces," the statement said.

Once completed, in about two years, the runway will be able to accommodate all fighter jets of the IAF.

How fraternity in India is different from the idea enshrined in the Constitution

Fraternity does not mean anything if it glosses over social inequalities and then invokes social solidarity. Such a solidarity comes riding on the hate against an imaginary other, and tends to maintain social status quo

Moggallan Bharti

The idea of fraternity, as philosopher Angel Puyol argues in his 2019 book *Political Fraternity- Democracy beyond Freedom & Democracy*, should be mainly understood in the domain of the political. That is to say that the concept involves the emancipation and empowerment of the people despite its variegated history, since the time of Plato; and though neglected, it remains a significant tenet of liberal political philosophy along with the idea of liberty and equality. India's independence struggle, and the subsequent emergence of constitutional democracy saw the necessity of liberty, equality and fraternity for a complex Indian society at the precipice of becoming an independent republic. In this context, Ambedkar's stress on the inseparability of the three ideas and the underlining of fraternity cannot be emphasised enough. The framers of the Indian Constitution knew the significance of fraternity in a society, divided on the basis of various hierarchical social inequalities.

Ironically though, fraternity also happens to be the constitutional value that has received the maximum neglect both in the world of ideas and in the political field of action. However, the notion of fraternity has its own journey within India's sociology, regardless of its huge political purchase otherwise. While fraternity remains one of the chief goals of India's parliamentary democracy, and is actually the foundational political objective of its constitutional democracy, the current nature of India's fraternity is different from the political fraternity espoused in its Constitution.

Origins of the concept

The idea of fraternity has been an elusive

concept since ancient times. In Plato's *Lysis*, the philosopher invokes the word *philia* (love) for the strong desire to pursue wisdom. That is, love and friendship with others becomes more meaningful through the sharing of knowledge. The emphasis is on 'share' which gives us an early idea on the discourse of fraternity in ancient Greece. In Aristotle, we see the emergence of the *polis* – the logical location of a man who remains, first and foremost, a political being, and hence is part of the *polis* and not of the wild. Justice and friendship among citizens came to be the most enduring features of the *polis*. This here, is the birth of the idea of political fraternity.

In the middle ages, fraternity flourished mostly through religion, within the churning of Christian society in Europe. The concept of fraternity then eventually found its entry into politics with the French revolution of 1789 in the triptych of 'liberté, égalité, fraternité'. From the civic-politico friendship of ancient Greece, to medieval Christian society, and then to its revolutionary dimension, fraternity has always found a place in the ever-evolving world of action.

Friendship among equals

In community ties, as M. C. Williams in *The Idea of Fraternity in America* (1973) explains, one sees an integral value system which is the foundation of the idea of fraternity. And it's not surprising that, in the western world, that is how the idea of fraternity grew. The privileging of the idea of community and the moral values associated with it, over the individual, gradually gave way to religious morality and its associated 'way of life'. This elementary dimension of fraternity is missing when we assess fraternal ties in India. For, in order to have fraternal bonding between individuals, they must

have a shared past. And that shared past has to be an amicable one, and cannot be drawn from ideological differences rooted in the vast social inequalities among different communities. Since ideological motivations hamper political fraternity between individuals, one has to have a secular conception of fraternity, and subsequently of its politics. Decidedly, the shared history of India is marred by the caste system, and it militates against the principle of equality as well as the idea of liberty. The traditional roots of organising civic life in India is predominantly communal; but the Constitution privileges the individual – enshrined in the liberty, equality, and fraternity triad – leading to everyday conflict with community.

Therefore, the only conception of fraternity feasible for India must be rooted in politics – the only realm where caste privilege can be challenged. The idea needs to be curated and carved, and instilled through political conditioning and not from the stand point of any moral considerations. One of the main ideas behind the introduction of a slew of affirmative actions – of which the reservation system has survived – was to build a certain equality between extremely different social groups in terms of their access to social and economic goods.

On the formulation of liberty, equality and fraternity co-existing as mutually indispensable preconditions to citizenship rights, besides Ambedkar of course, we also see John Rawls stressing on the same principle in his *Theory of Justice* (1971), wherein his 'difference principle' works towards maintaining a certain equality in order to realise political fraternity. The idea was and still is to create a level playing field between varying social groups, locked in structural hierarchies, to begin to understand what it takes to really actualise fraternal

relations. This can only be possible with the underlying acceptability of the idea of equality. In the absence of this crucial understanding, what you have is fraternal ties for sure, but within caste groups, and not across them. In other words, what we have is caste consciousness of unity, which remains aloof to members of other caste groups, and is often hateful to members of so-called lower caste groups in particular. India essentially then has fraternity within its caste communities, where forging political unity remains a forlorn goal.

The limits to fraternity

Certain preconditions are necessary in order to achieve the kind of political fraternity inculcated by the Constitution of India. At the very first, fraternity does not mean anything if it glosses over social inequalities and then invokes social solidarity. Such a solidarity comes riding on the hate against an imaginary other, and tends to maintain social status quo which bolsters the already privileged at the cost of the continued subjugation of the underprivileged. Secondly, the call of such a fraternity is increasingly replaced with the rhetoric of belligerent nationalism which castigates a home grown religious minority as its arch enemy. Religious minorities have faced such social and political opprobrium countless times in this country. And finally, any sort of fundamentalism jettisons the possibility of fraternity – a fanatic can be anything but fraternal in the true sense.

To conclude, in India, caste and the idea of political fraternity, given its social milieu, cannot coexist. One has to give way for the other to emerge. And to figure out which one survives and which goes, is the task of the politics of the future.

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