

Monday, 8 February 2016

Health Secretary reviews preparedness on Zika Virus Disease

10 new lab diagnosis facilities to soon become operational

The Health Secretary Shri B P Sharma reviewed the preparedness regarding Zika Virus Disease at a high level meeting, here today. Also present at the meeting were senior officers from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR), Airports Authority of India (AAI), Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Shipping and Ministry of Civil Aviation in addition to representatives from State governments of Puducherry, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu. WHO India representative Dr. Henk Bekedam and other representatives from WHO also participated in the meeting.

In addition to the two diagnostic facilities at NCDC and National Institute of Virology (NIV) Pune, 10 new facilities will become operational by end of February, 2016. These are located in the states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry, Karnataka, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Assam. It was also informed that another ten will be operational in phase-2.

A 24*7 Control Room for providing information on Zika Virus Disease is now operational at the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. The numbers of the Control Room are 23061469 and 23063205.

It was informed that a travel advisory against non-essential travel has been issued some days back by the Government. Some of the salient points in the advisory are:

- Non-essential travel to the affected countries to be deferred/ cancelled.
- Pregnant women or women who are trying to become pregnant should defer/ cancel their travel to the affected areas.
- All travelers to the affected countries/ areas should strictly follow individual protective measures, especially during day time, to prevent mosquito bites (use of mosquito repellent cream, electronic mosquito repellants, use of bed-nets, and dress that appropriately covers most of the body parts).
- Persons with co-morbid conditions (diabetes, hypertension, chronic respiratory illness, Immune disorders etc.) should seek advice from the nearest health facility, prior to travel to an affected country.
- Travelers having febrile illness within two weeks of return from an affected country should report to the nearest health facility.
- Pregnant women who have travelled to areas with Zika virus transmission should mention about their travel during ante-natal visits in order to be assessed and monitored appropriately.

Officials informed that signages informing about the Zika Virus Disease are being placed at 18 international airports. Informative pamphlets on the disease have been prepared for immigrating passengers. The surveillance activities have been activated through the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) network. Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) have also been formed in the States. Instructions and guidelines have been issued and the members have been oriented towards Zika. A video conference has also been conducted with the states for disseminating the guidelines to them.

It was reiterated that one of the key control measures is the vector control of Aedes mosquito which also transmits Dengue. Mosquito control is being taken up on priority at the premises of airports and seaports, it was informed. All the aircrafts are being dis-insected as per the WHO guidelines. In addition, vector breeding in containers at the seaports is also being taken up and National Vector Borne Diseases Control Programme (NVBDCP) and National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) are checking for control of vector densities.

It was also decided during the meeting to engage with communities for vector control measures in a decentralized manner which was agreed to be more effective. Measures are being taken in this direction, it was informed.