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Media alert from the Media Scanning & Verification Cell, IDSP-NCDC.

Alert ID	Publication Date	Reporting Date	Place Name	News Source/Publication Language
3929	19.03.2017	21.03.2017	Hyderabad Telangana	www.timesofindia.com/English http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/deadly-virus-strain-of-pathogenic-bird-flu-h5n8-found-alarm-in-zoo/articleshow/57713689.cms
Title:	Deadly virus strain of pathogenic bird flu H5N8 found, alarm in zoo in district Hyderabad, Telangana			
Action By CSU, IDSP -NCDC	Information communicated to DSU-Hyderabad, SSU-Telangana			

In a major cause for concern, researchers have found a new strain of highly pathogenic bird flu virus H5N8 in India. It is this strain that had killed birds in Delhi and Gwalior zoos in October last year. The strain has been possibly introduced by wild birds that migrate to different parts of India from other countries during September-March. The strain of H5N8 carries two gene pools from the H5N8 viruses isolated in Russian Federation, Mongolia, Vietnam, China and Eurasia.

Bird flu in the country is normally associated with H5N1 strain of the virus. But now a newly re-assorted strain of H5N8, which has thus far been limited to other countries, has entered India. Genome analysis of the bird flu virus that killed birds in the National Zoological Park, Delhi, and Gandhi Zoological Park, Gwalior, in October 2016 has revealed that the new strain was behind the mortality .

Following the avian deaths in Delhi and Gwalior zoos, it was thought that the bird flu virus could either be H5N1 or H5N8. But now researchers reveal it is a new version of H5N8 carrying the genetic material of H5N8 viruses in other countries. Many zoos in the country including Hyderabad, Tirupati and Visakhapatnam face the threat as the migratory season will last for a few weeks more.

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**Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control,
Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**

22-Sham Nath Marg, Delhi – 110 054

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The research finding by scientists from the National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases, Bhopal, appeared in the latest (April 2017) issue of the Emerging Infectious Diseases, published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the USA. The viruses from dead birds in Delhi and Gwalior are different from the existing strains. "They are 7:1 reassortants of H5N8 viruses isolated in May 2016 from wild birds in the Russian Federation and China. This suggests the virus has spread to India during southward winter migration of birds," the research study revealed. As part of the study , 83 samples from the dead birds waterfowl and painted stork - were collected and 20 avian influenza viruses were isolated from them.

Referring to the study , Prof Niyaz Ahmed of the department of biotechnology & bio-informatics, University of Hyderabad, points out that the strain has not caused harm to human beings thus far. " At least 24 European countries have reported H5N8 outbreaks since June 2016. Countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa have also reported the virus. However, none of the countries has thus far reported any human infections with this virus," he said.

He, however, adds that theoretically it is possible that some random mutations could render the virus more adaptogenic to mammalian system. Prof Niyaz Ahmad suggests that efforts to block contact of migratory birds with farmed poultry should always be in place in all seasons and situations to stop the virus.

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