

WHO points towards a different pandemic...

On **21 July 2021**, the National IHR focal point of India notified WHO of one human case of avian Influenza A(H5N1) from Haryana state, northern India. This is the first reported case of human infection of influenza A(H5N1) virus in India.

The death of an 11-year-old boy from Haryana at Delhi's All India Institute of Medical Sciences due to Avian influenza – **the first such fatality in the country** – stressed the need to respond to zoonotic diseases in a timely manner.

Several instances of bird flu had been reported that year: more than 2,000 birds died at Pong Lake in Himachal Pradesh. The disease has been found in bar-headed geese, black and brown headed gulls and the Eurasian teal among migratory birds.

This zoonotic disease is generally found in wild birds. Waterfowl such as ducks and geese are affected but do not show any symptoms. Migratory birds too are reservoirs of the virus. These birds put farmed poultry as well the people who handle them at risk. Since no other human infections were recorded, human to human transmission is unlikely.

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying released the revised action plan for Prevention, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza in 2021.

India developed systems for surveillance since its first outbreak in 2006, when birds were reported dead in the village of Navapur in Maharashtra's Nandurbar district. This was caused by the H5N1 strain.

Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme under National Centre for Disease Control, Delhi, is supposed to keep tabs on the avian influenza in India. All human infections caused by a new influenza subtype are reportable under the International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005). The WHO has been pointing to a flu pandemic for some time now. However, the detection of this cases does not change current WHO recommendations on public health measures and surveillance of influenza.

By: Mehul Sharma (V-20 18-03-023)