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India declared free from bird flu

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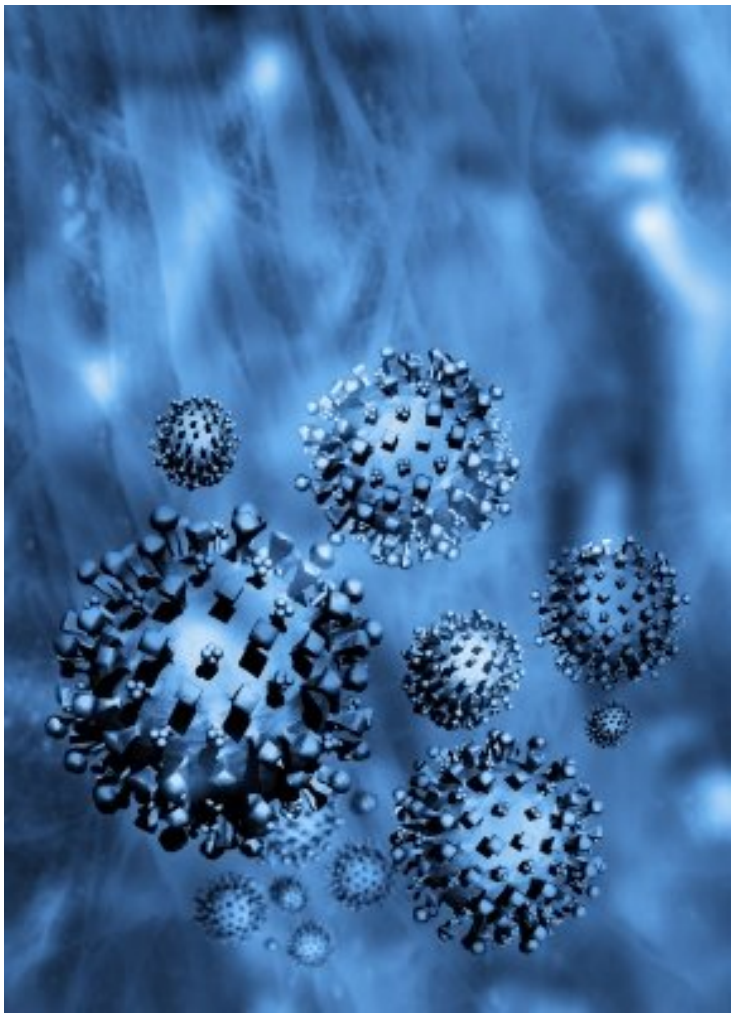

Singapore: India has declared itself free from the highly contagious avian influenza or bird flu, which could help in boosting exports and business for the country's poultry sector

"India has declared itself free from notifiable Avian Influenza (H5N1), commonly called bird flu, and notified it to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)," the department of animal husbandry under the agriculture ministry said in an officials statement.

Traders are expecting to begin exports of poultry products to overseas markets after this declaration as the outbreak of bird flu in certain parts of the country had led many countries to impose ban on imports of such consumable items from India three months ago.

The statement however reiterated that the department would maintain regular surveillance throughout the country, especially in the vulnerable areas bordering infected countries and in areas visited by migratory birds.

The manual of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) has said on the H5N1 avian influenza that very occasionally, humans may also be infected with this virus when they come in close contact with infected poultry and their droppings. The disease is said to spread from infected birds to other winged creatures through contact with nasal and respiratory secretions and also due to contamination of feed and water.

Early in August, India had notified an outbreak of bird flu at Poultry Production Unit, College of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry at Anjora in Durg and Government Poultry Farm at Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh. The center had immediately issued a directive alerting all states and Union Territories to take all possible precautionary measures to contain the spread of avian influenza. This however had led to a huge loss to the country's poultry farmers as government agencies had to destroy the birds in substantially high numbers to prevent an outbreak.