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Mysterious litchi syndrome, kills 8 in India

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Singapore: A new virus spreading from the litchi fruit has killed at least eight children and left several others serious in the Malda district in West Bengal, India. The affected children were found to be between the age group of 3 and 5 years.

The virus is reported to cause encephalopathy, a grave condition leading to high grade fever, vomiting and convulsions. At present, six children with the symptom are being treated at the medical college.

Abundant production of litchi and the falling prices had led to huge consumption of the fruit this year, sources said in reports. According to reports, Malda had been a victim of the disease earlier too. The year 2012, reported 100 children dying of the disease.

Dr M A Rashid, vice-principal of Malda Medical College appealed to the people to admit their children as soon as they see any symptoms associated with encephalopathy.

The district administration remained clueless on prevention or control and has sent a team to the affected villages to analyze the situation. Mr Krishnendu Choudhury, minister of food processing and horticulture said that, "The virus spread from the fruit and due precautions would be taken to prevent the occurrence of a possible epidemic."