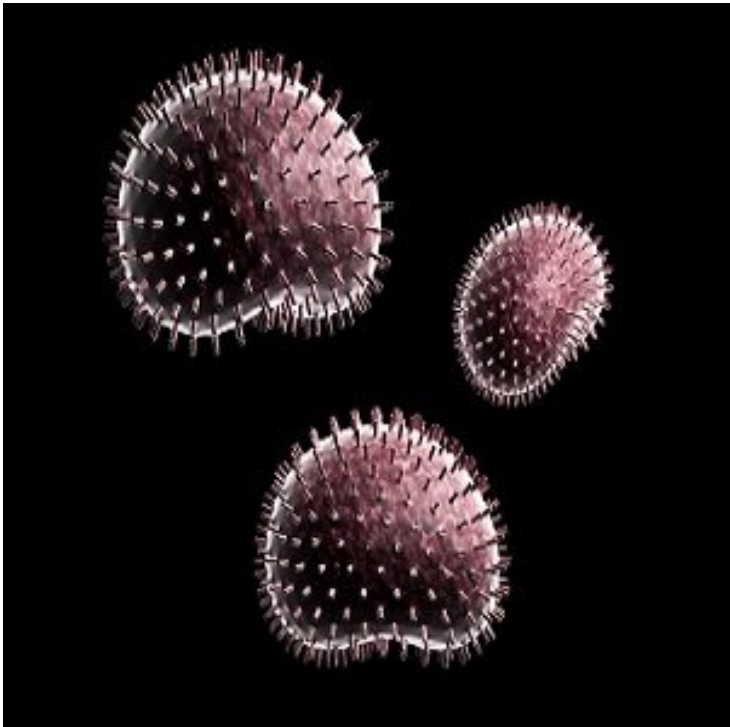


WHO: MERS in Asia, a wake up call

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WHO: MERS in Asia, a wake up call



Singapore: With South Korea grappling in the clutches of deadly MERS virus, many Southeast Asian countries are stepping up measures to prevent the virus from entering their borders. The disease continues to claim lives in South Korea, where officials announced 3 more deaths further death in the country's outbreak raising the total death toll to 29.

The Vietnamese government had set up 98 mobile response teams by Wednesday, with 65 in Hanoi and 33 in the commercial hub of Ho Chi Minh City. Each likely includes emergency medical technicians and nurses. Health Minister Mr Nguyen Thi Kim Tien said the large population of South Koreans working in Vietnam means the risk of a MERS outbreak is high.

Vietnam has 135,000 South Koreans, the most in Southeast Asia. The country houses a major Samsung Electronics smartphone plant, and companies such as Lotte Group and Daewoo have a presence there as well. Following the confirmation of a case in Thailand, health authorities have enhanced precautionary measures to prevent the disease from spreading to other nations.

The World Health Organization described the MERS outbreak as a "wake up call" highlighting that outbreaks can happen anywhere. Meanwhile Researchers from the US National Institutes of Health and China's Fudan University have been working on an antibody treatment that could fight MERS. An antibody is a protein that combats pathogens like viruses and bacteria.

The antibody treatment has only been through lab and animal tests so far and requires trials on humans before it could be available to MERS patients. So far, this compound has been considered the most potent of several antibodies that could be used to fight MERS, according to a scientific summary published in the Journals Center for Cancer Research.