

Suspected epidemic kills 42 children in Bihar, India

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Singapore: A mysterious epidemic is daunting the state of Bihar claiming the lives of 42 children, so far. The disease, suspected to be an outbreak of encephalitis is spreading fast in the northern districts of the state. Over 100 children with similar symptoms have been admitted to different hospitals in the state.

Children reportedly suffer from vomiting, convulsions and high fever. The disease has become an annual affair in Bihar which had been the epicenter of the disease earlier too. Last year the epidemic claimed 62 lives.

Despite of best efforts by the government of India and international research organisations, no cause or cure for the disease has been found yet. Gorakhpur in eastern Uttar Pradesh, India, also has been in the grip of encephalitis.

Dr Gyan Bhushan, civil surgeon of Muzaffarpur, said "The causes can be attributed to extreme heat and humidity in the region. When the humidity increases these children seem to develop glucose deficiency."

Union Health Minister Mr Harsh Vardhan announced several measures to tackle the disease, including a five year action plan similar to the pulse polio drive. He stated that there would be separate wards for encephalitis and dedicated surveillance systems to track the outbreak.

Chief Minister Mr Jitan Ram Manjhi visited the Sri Krishna Medical College and Hospital in Muzaffarpur, Bihar to take stock of the situation. He said that the disease needs to be identified and curtailed, and experts from across the globe would be invited to solve this mystery.