

Swine flu cases in India mount to 23

The number of people infected with the influenza A(H1N1) virus in India has risen to 23 with authorities here confirming that three more air passengers were found to be suffering from swine flu.

Two sisters aged eight and four, and a 45-year-old woman were late Sunday confirmed to be infected, taking the total number of cases here to 12, the highest in India. The confirmed cases include five children.

The two children and their mother arrived here from New York June 10 by Indian Airlines Flight IA-140. Their mother is among five air passengers kept under observation for suspected symptoms of swine flu.

Doctors at the Andhra Pradesh Chest Hospital said the samples of the suspected cases, including two children had been sent to the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) in New Delhi.

Health officials said they would also screen passengers of IA-140 who sat three rows in front and three rows behind the two girls and their mother.

The 45-year-old woman, who was also tested positive late Sunday, is staying in the hospital along with her 20-month-old grandson who was confirmed to be infected Friday.

Authorities have also sent the samples of the grandfather of a six-year-old girl who was tested positive last week. He has been staying with the girl in the hospital.

Four air passengers who were admitted to the Chest Hospital Sunday with suspected symptoms of swine flu include a nine-year-old boy who arrived from New Jersey and a 43-year-old woman who came from Kuwait. A six-year-old girl who arrived from Minneapolis June 12 and a 27-year-old man who came from New York are also under observation.

With the three new cases, the number of patients undergoing treatment at the hospital rose to six. Six other patients were treated and discharged from the hospital.

Health officials said all the infected persons came from abroad, majority of them from the US. However, a local youth contracted the flu from his brother, a techie who arrived from Philadelphia May 31. Three of his co-passengers were also found infected.

Meanwhile, the state authorities are set to launch an exclusive interactive voice response (IVRS) facility on influenza A(H1N1). The IVRS facility, to be inaugurated later Monday, will provide information and clarify doubts among the general public with regards to the flu.

The IVRS has been developed by the CEO of Voicegate Technologies Syed Mohammad, whose son Syed Rehan recently recovered from swine flu.

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