

PM calls for early warning system on epidemic outbreaks

In the first publicised high-level meeting, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh Thursday reviewed the recent incidences of vector borne diseases including chikungunya and dengue and called for setting up an early warning system on epidemic outbreaks.

According to health ministry, over 160 people have died this year due to spread of dengue across the country. In the case of chikungunya, Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss has disclaimed any deaths due to the disease.

Both the diseases are caused by aedes aegypti mosquitoes.

'The prime minister has instructed the ministry of health to restructure the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) and to transform it into an 'Early Warning System' for the outbreak of epidemics,' said a statement of the Prime Minister's Office.

'The programme should be made accountable for any failure in this regard,' Manmohan Singh told the meeting attended by Ramdoss and his deputy minister Panabaka Lakshmi and senior officials of the ministries of health, urban development, panchayati raj and department of drinking water.

The health ministry has also been instructed to issue regular health alerts and bulletins to create public awareness for pre-emptive action at the level of community and households.

Manmohan Singh instructed that funds under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) and National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) should be utilised both for pre-emptive public health intervention at the community level and for undertaking sanitation and disease prevention programmes.

Urging the media to play a positive role in raising public awareness, the prime minister called for observance of one day as a national cleanliness and public health day with community level action to prevent epidemics and ensure proper sanitation and cleanliness in public places and within houses.

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