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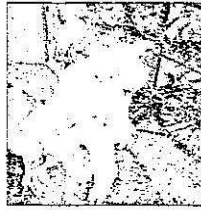
ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: Animal husbandry - Bird flu

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: Deccan Herald ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE: 9/1/2021

## Take bird flu threat seriously

Even as the country struggles to gain control over Covid-19, the H5N1 virus, which causes avian influenza or bird flu, has struck several states. Mass bird deaths are being reported from Haryana, Kerala, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa. Bird deaths have been reported from Dakshin Kannada district, too, but whether this is the result of the H5N1 virus is still being ascertained. While most of the bird deaths in Himachal are of migratory birds like wild geese, elsewhere it is hens that have been impacted the most. Avian flu is a highly contagious viral disease caused by Influenza Type A viruses. In its mild form, the virus' impact is limited to reduced egg production. The more serious strain of the virus can be lethal. Wild aquatic birds are a natural reservoir for the virus and migratory birds among them carry it across long distances to spread the flu. Therefore, the flu's spread across vast distances is rapid.

Governments at the Centre and states have issued heightened alerts and called on animal husbandry officials to step up surveillance near water bodies, poultry farms and live bird markets. Animal husbandry department officials and poultry farmers must be provided with adequate protective gear to prevent infection of humans. Avian flu is a disease that strikes birds mainly, but infection of animals and humans has been reported in recent decades. Since 1997, when the first human to be infected by the virus was detected in Hong Kong, hundreds of cases of H5N1 infection of humans have been reported from across the world and there have been many fatalities, too.



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India must move to prevent the spread of avian flu as its health infrastructure and economy cannot survive the impact of multiple flu outbreaks. The Covid-19 pandemic has already dealt the country a blow. An avian flu outbreak would make recovery even more difficult. During the 2006 and 2008 flu outbreaks, poultry was culled on a large scale, resulting in losses running into tens of thousands of crores for the country's poultry sector. Both the poultry giants and marginal farmers were devastated. It is imperative therefore that steps are taken to prevent the need for culling of poultry. This means putting in place strong preventive measures to contain the spread. In several districts in Kerala, poultry farmers have begun mass culling of birds. Culling should not be the first response to the virus. Therefore, the government must keep poultry farmers informed of the severity of the outbreak to prevent rumours from driving panic reactions.

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