

US softens Zika travel advisory to India



Six months after issuing travel alerts for American travellers visiting India, the US health protection agency Centre for Disease Control (CDC) modified and softened the Zika travel advisory to India.

In mid-2018, India faced a countrywide outbreak of mosquito-borne Zika virus that leads to congenital Zika syndrome and other neurological malformations in the new borns; prompting the US health agencies to issue travel alerts for tourists visiting India. In December 2018, the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) advisory depicted that India has an ongoing outbreak of the disease in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and its surrounding states and categorised India's Zika virus status as "ongoing outbreak". The Zika travel advisory further suggested pregnant women not to travel to the areas affected by the outbreak.

In March 2019, the Health Ministry of India had instructed the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to provide evidences to CDC that the Zika outbreak has been successfully stopped in India, and there has been no reports of active cases since three months. ICMR had initiated a survey about the status of Zika-infected cases and other neurological malformations in their new born - and the report was rolled out with a conclusion that India is currently free from any new active reports. Hence, the ICMR communicated with CDC and urged to "withdraw or modify" the advisory, along with evidences of the outbreak being contained in India.

On Monday, ICMR updated that the communication with CDC was successful and that the US has modified the Zika travel advisory for India on March 27, 2019. As per the updated travel notice, the status of India on Zika virus has been changed from "ongoing outbreak" to "current or past transmission but no current outbreak". To ensure that there are no mutational viruses linked with Zika in India, the Phase II Zika vaccine clinical trials of Bharat Biotech International Ltd will be conducted soon.