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1. Hezbollah Pager Attacks: A Timeline and Analysis

Overview of the Attacks

On September 17, simultaneous explosions from pagers used by Hezbollah resulted in at least nine deaths and thousands of injuries, including Iran's envoy to Beirut. Lebanese Information Minister Ziad Makary labeled this as "Israeli aggression." Following this, walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah also detonated, causing nearly two dozen fatalities and injuring over 450 individuals.



Rising Tensions in the Region

The pager and walkie-talkie blasts occur amidst escalating hostilities between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah, with ongoing exchanges of fire along the Israel-Lebanon border since the Gaza war began in October.

The nature of these attacks could signal a new phase in the long-standing regional conflict. The use of low-tech devices surprised Hezbollah, resulting in casualties among its members and prompting vows of retaliation against Israel.

Understanding Pagers

Pagers, or beepers, are communication devices that have largely been overshadowed by smartphones. They work by receiving radio signals from towers and can be one-way (receiving messages only) or two-way (allowing responses). Pagers are often more reliable in areas with poor cell coverage and are still used in sectors like healthcare and emergency services due to their energy efficiency and resilience.

Advantages for Covert Operations

Pagers offer significant advantages for covert communications:

- 1. Limited Surveillance Risk:** Pagers lack GPS and internet connectivity, reducing the risk of location tracking.
- 2. Difficult to Intercept:** Their use of radio frequencies makes interception harder than with cellular devices.
- 3. Modification Potential:** Pagers can be altered to trigger explosives upon receiving specific messages, making them suitable for covert operations.

Experts suggest that Hezbollah's reliance on pagers stemmed from a belief that their phone systems were compromised, leading them to opt for older technology perceived as safer.

The Role of Israeli Manipulation

It is believed that Israel may have manipulated the pagers used by Hezbollah. Reports indicate the devices bore the branding of Gold Apollo, a company that denied direct involvement, asserting the pagers were produced by a licensed European manufacturer. Analysts theorize that Israel could have set up a front company to sell tampered pagers, embedding explosives within them.

Execution of the Attacks

The attacks may have involved Israeli engineers intercepting and modifying the pagers before delivery. Experts speculate that the explosives, possibly PETN, were integrated into the devices as part of a sophisticated supply chain manipulation, highlighting Israel's control over the distribution of such technology to Hezbollah.

Conclusion: A New Era in Armed Conflict?

The use of pagers in these attacks raises questions about their potential as tools in future conflicts. With their inconspicuous nature and relative immunity to high-tech surveillance, they may become a favored method for covert operations. As regional tensions continue, the implications of this incident are likely to be far-reaching.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Internal Security

Source: The Hindu

2. Nipah Protocol in Kerala

Overview of the Recent Nipah Scare

On September 9, 2023, a 24-year-old man died of Nipah virus at MES Medical College Hospital in Malappuram, Kerala. The state health authorities confirmed the case after test results from the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune. This marked the second Nipah death in Malappuram in two months.

Response to the Positive Test

Upon confirmation, the health department implemented the Nipah protocol, which included forming 16 committees and identifying those who had close contact with the victim. Kerala's Health Minister, Veena George, declared mandatory restrictions, including the use of face masks and social distancing in public places in Malappuram.

Previous Nipah Incidents

This is Kerala's sixth Nipah outbreak since 2018. The state has reported 22 Nipah-related deaths. The 2018 outbreak in Kozhikode and Malappuram was the deadliest, claiming 17 lives. Despite interventions, sporadic cases continue to surface, suggesting the virus may persist in the region.

Delay in Virus Identification

The infected man, a student in Bengaluru, returned home in late August 2023. He sought medical attention for fever and walking difficulty before being admitted on September 8 with symptoms of meningitis or encephalitis. His condition raised suspicions, prompting further tests.

What is Nipah virus?



NIPAH VIRUS (NiV) INFECTION IS A NEWLY EMERGING ZOOONOSIS THAT CAUSES SEVERE DISEASE IN BOTH ANIMALS AND HUMANS

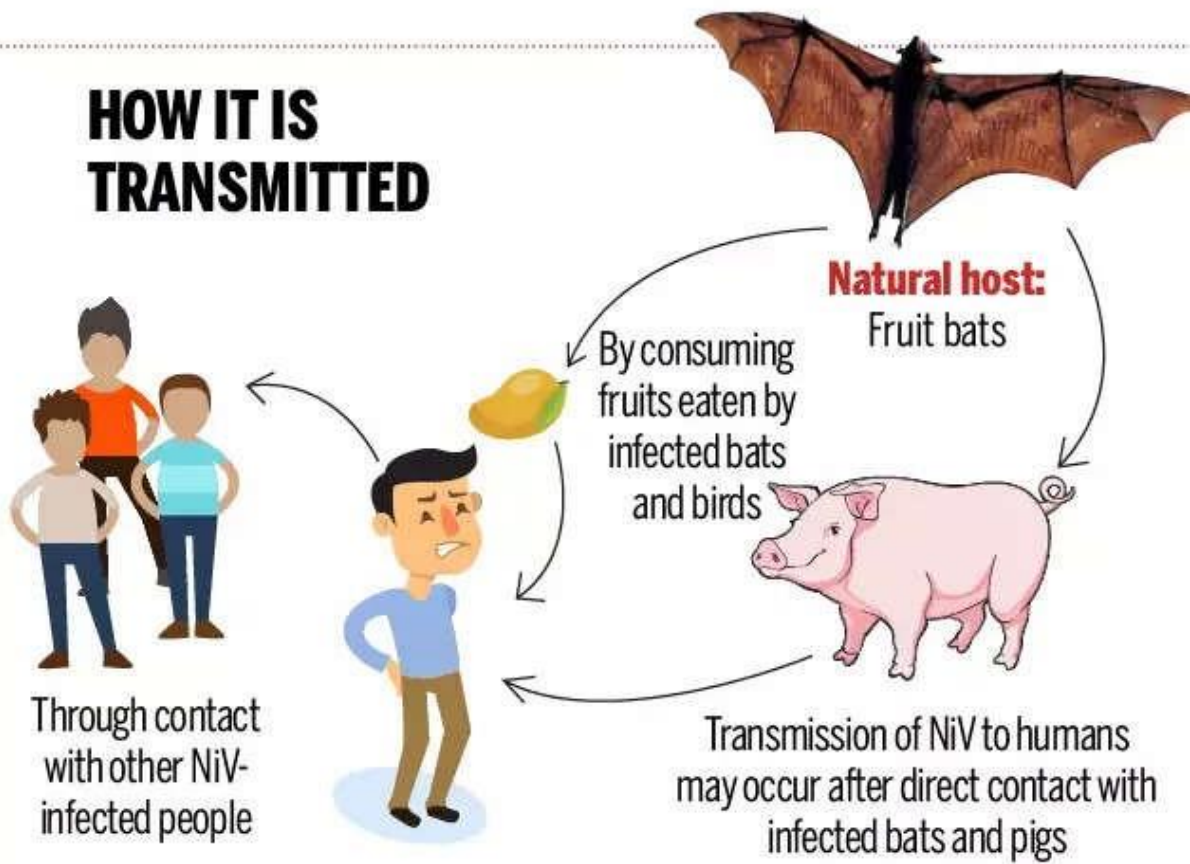


NiV first identified in 1998 during an outbreak in Malaysia



Fruit bats are natural hosts of NiV

HOW IT IS TRANSMITTED



Government Response

After the case was confirmed, the government acted swiftly by declaring containment zones in five civic wards. Schools, cinemas, and public gathering places were closed, and shops were allowed to operate only during specific hours. A Nipah control room was set up, and 267 people who had contact with the victim were traced and quarantined.

Origin of Nipah Virus

Bats are considered the primary carriers of the Nipah virus. Transmission usually occurs through the consumption of bat-contaminated fruits or direct contact with infected individuals. However, the exact source of the virus in the recent cases remains unclear.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: The Hindu

3. Azerbaijan's Climate Fund Proposal

Introduction of a New Climate Fund

Azerbaijan, host of COP29, has proposed a climate fund to support developing countries. The fund would be financed through "voluntary" contributions from fossil-fuel-producing countries and companies. This proposal comes as negotiations on a global climate finance agreement struggle to make progress ahead of the COP29 conference in November 2023 at Baku, Azerbaijan.



The Climate Finance Gap

Developed countries are currently obligated to provide at least \$100 billion annually to help developing countries combat climate change. However, the Paris Agreement requires this amount to increase after 2025. Negotiations aim to finalize a new climate finance agreement, which could include higher targets to reflect the increasing costs of

climate action.

Challenges with the New Fund

1. Limited Impact of Voluntary Contributions

Although Azerbaijan's proposal is well-intentioned, relying on voluntary contributions raises concerns. Similar funds, even those with mandatory contributions, have struggled to secure adequate financing. For instance, the Loss and Damage Fund, created at COP27, has only received pledges of \$600-700 million, far below the needs of vulnerable countries.

2. Disagreements on Climate Finance Definitions

A major sticking point in the negotiations is the lack of clarity on what constitutes "climate finance." Developing countries have raised concerns about double-counting and say that the actual amount of money flowing for climate action is much lower than what is claimed by developed nations.

3. Neglect of Adaptation Projects

Currently, most climate finance is directed at mitigation projects, which reduce emissions and benefit the entire planet. In contrast, adaptation projects, which help countries adjust to the impacts of climate change, receive less than 20% of climate finance. Developing countries are demanding that adaptation projects receive at least 50% of the funds.

The New Cumulative Quantitative Goal (NCQG)

Need for Trillions, Not Billions

The most crucial element of the new finance agreement is determining the amount of money needed after 2025. Estimates suggest that trillions of dollars are required annually for climate action. Proposals from developing countries, including India, suggest amounts between \$1 trillion and \$1.5 trillion annually. However, given that developed countries have struggled to meet even the \$100 billion target, progress on agreeing to a higher amount has been slow.

Calls for More Contributors

Developed countries argue that wealthier nations like China, South Korea, and oil-rich Gulf states should also contribute to climate finance. These countries were not originally obligated to provide finance under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), but their economies have since grown. However, this push to expand the donor base is seen by some as an attempt to avoid responsibilities.

Conclusion: Azerbaijan's Fund May Fall Short

While Azerbaijan's proposed climate fund is a positive step, its reliance on voluntary contributions and lack of formal negotiations may limit its impact. With current funds already underfunded, this new initiative might not be enough to bridge the climate finance gap required to address the growing challenges of climate change.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: Indian Express