

'Novel Coronavirus Cannot Pass From Mother To Child Late In Pregnancy'



Press Trust Of India

The 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) may not pass to the child in the womb during late pregnancy, or cause severe health outcomes in a newborn, according to a study published in The Lancet journal.

The small observational study analysed women from Wuhan, China, who were in the third trimester of pregnancy, and had pneumonia caused by COVID-19.

There were two cases of foetal distress in the study, but all nine pregnancies resulted in live-births, the researchers said.

They also found that symptoms from COVID-19 infection in pregnant women were similar to those reported in non-pregnant adults, and no women in the study developed severe pneumonia or died.

The team cautioned that the findings are based on a limited number of cases, over a short period of time, and only included women who were late in their pregnancy, and gave birth by caesarean section.

The effects of mothers being infected with the virus during the first or second trimester of pregnancy, and the subsequent outcomes for their offspring remain unclear, as well as whether the virus can be passed from mother to child during vaginal birth, they said.

The latest study comes after the news of a newborn born to a mother infected with COVID-19 testing positive for COVID-19 infection within 36 hours of birth,

which prompted questions about whether the virus could be contracted in the womb.

"It is important to note that many important clinical details of this case are missing, and for this reason, we cannot conclude from this one case whether intrauterine infection is possible," said lead author of the study, Professor Yuanzhen Zhang, from Zhongnan Hospital of Wuhan University, China. "Nonetheless, we should continue to pay special attentions to newborns born to mothers with COVID-19 pneumonia to help prevent infections in this group," Zhang said.

Existing studies into the effects of COVID-19 apply to the general population, and there is limited information about the virus in pregnant women, noted Professor Huixia Yang, from Peking University First Hospital in China.

This is important to study because pregnant women can be particularly susceptible to respiratory pathogens and severe pneumonia, because they are immunocompromised and because of pregnancy-related physiological changes which could leave them at higher risk of poor outcomes, Yang said.

"Although in our study no patients developed severe pneumonia or died of their infection, we need to continue to study the virus to understand the effects in a larger group of pregnant women," said Yang.

The medical records of nine pregnant women who had pneu-

monia caused by COVID-19 infection were reviewed.

Samples of amniotic fluid, cord blood, throat swabs of newborns, and breast milk were taken for six of the nine cases, and tested for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

All mothers in the study were aged between 26-40 years.

None of them had underlying health conditions, but one developed gestational hypertension from week 27 of her pregnancy, and another developed pre-eclampsia at week 31, the researchers said.

All nine pregnancies resulted in livebirths, and there were no cases of neonatal asphyxia, they said.

Four women had pregnancy complications -- two had foetal distress and two had premature rupture of membrane -- and four women had preterm labour which was not related to their infection, and occurred after 36 gestational weeks.

Two of the prematurely born newborns had a low birthweight, the study found.

The researchers noted that their findings are similar to observations of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) virus in pregnant women, where there was no evidence of the virus being passed from mother to child during pregnancy or birth.

They also noted that future follow-up of the women and children in the study will be necessary to determine their long-term safety and health.

Polls For 12,500 Panchayat

panchayat halqas and panch wards. Issuance of the first notification would be on February 15, Kumar said.

The first phase of the bypolls will be held on March 5, followed by second on March 7, third on March 9, fourth on March 12, fifth on March 14, sixth on March 16, seventh on March 18 and last on March 20, he said.

The chief electoral officer said, "Ballot boxes would be used during these elections. Sufficient number of ballot boxes have been made available for the purpose."

The process for filling 11,639 panch seats and 1,011 sarpanch seats will completed by March 26, he said.

The Panchayat election was held in November-December, 2018, and 22,214 panches and 3,459 sarpanches were elected in out of 33,592 panch and 4,290 sarpanch constituencies.

Further vacancies have accrued on various accounts such as deaths and resignations. Also as a result of polls to block development committee (BDCs) chairpersons in October, 2019, another 307 seats of panch and sarpanch fell vacant, Kumar said.

He said that the candidates elected during these by-elections shall hold office for the remainder of the period of five years commencing from the date of constitution of Halqa Panchayat.

The panchayat bypolls would be videographed and district panchayat election officers (deputy commissioners) will arrange sufficient numbers of video and digital cameras and teams for the purpose, the chief electoral officer said.

In order to enable Kashmiri Migrant voters to exercise their franchise through postal ballots, "Migrant Postal Ballot" scheme was notified for the 2018 panchayat elections, he added.

Mockery Of Democracy: Yechury

major political leaders & workers under draconian PSA on flimsy charges, now this mockery of democracy. Time has come for Modi government to declare J&K as a jail. Appoint a Jail warden not a Lt. Governor. The Modi govt will be held to account on this (sic)," CPI(M) general secretary Yechury tweeted.

He also slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his remarks at a summit on Wednesday that only 2,200 people in the country had declared earnings of Rs one crore per annum.

"Mr Modi's complete disrespect for facts or data or the truth, shows up all the time. The only tricks they all have is spin and Goebbels-like propaganda," Yechury said quoting reports that the data stated by Modi on taxpayers was wrong.

"As per Modi, every Indian is a thief while his party is the one that has usurped crores secretly through opaque electoral bonds. If no one pays tax, what has Modi done over past 6 years? Didn't he unleash demonetisation claiming that it would end all black money & tax evasion? (sic)," the CPI(M) general secretary said.

In his speech at the Times Now Summit, Modi had said, "In the last five years, more than 1.5 crore cars have been sold in the

country. Over three crore Indians went abroad for work or travel. But the situation is that only one-and-a-half crore people in our country of more than 130 crore pay income tax."

India's Action In J-K Have

government unilaterally revoked the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, the government continues to block most internet in the region".

"Hundreds of Kashmiris remain in 'preventive detention', including key political figures," they said.

Signatories to the letter are Chris Van Hollen, Todd Young, Richard J Durbin and Lindsey O Graham.

"In addition, the Indian government has taken other troubling steps that threaten the rights of certain religious minorities and the secular character of the state. This includes the passage of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act which is being challenged in India's Supreme Court," the senators wrote.

In the letter, the Senators requested Pompeo for a State Department assessment of a number of issues in India including the number of individuals detained by the government for political purposes and their treatment; current restrictions on communications in Jammu and Kashmir; current accessibility of Jammu and Kashmir; and restrictions on religious freedoms in Jammu and Kashmir.

The actions taken by the Indian government in Jammu and Kashmir, they said, have severe consequences. That is why, in the Fiscal Year 2020 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programmes appropriations report, the Congress urged India to fully restore telecommunications and internet services, lift its lockdown and curfew and release the individuals detained pursuant to the Indian government's revocation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

Trump will pay a state visit to India on February 24 and 25 at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who on Wednesday said the US President's visit will be a "very special one" and it will go a long way in further cementing India-USA friendship. India maintains that the Indian Constitution guarantees fundamental rights to all its citizens, including its minority communities.

It is widely acknowledged that India is a vibrant democracy where the Constitution provides protection of religious freedom, and where democratic governance and rule of law further promote and protect fundamental rights, a senior official of the Ministry of External Affairs has said.

According to the CAA, members of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities who have come from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan till December 31, 2014 following religious persecution there will get Indian citizenship.

The Indian government has been emphasising that the new law will not deny any citizenship rights, but has been brought to protect the oppressed minorities of neighbouring countries and give them citizenship.

Defending the CAA, Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month said that the law is not about taking away citizenship, it is about giving citizenship.

"We must all know that any person of any

religion from any country of the world who believes in India and its Constitution can apply for Indian citizenship through due process. There's no problem in that," he said.

SC To Hear Today Plea Challenging

bench, also comprising Justice Indira Banerjee, as Justice M M Shantanagoudar had on Wednesday recused himself from hearing the matter without citing any specific reason.

Sara's plea had come up for hearing before a 3-judge bench of Justices N V Ramana, M M Shantanagoudar and Sanjiv Khanna.

Sara had on February 10 approached the top court challenging her brother's detention under the J-K Public Safety Act, 1978, saying the order of detention is "manifestly illegal" and there is no question of him being a "threat to the maintenance of public order".

The plea has sought quashing of the February 5 order detaining Omar Abdullah, former chief minister of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir, under the PSA and also sought his production before the court.

Sara has said that exercise of powers by authorities under the CrPC to detain individuals, including political leaders, was "clearly mala fide to ensure that the opposition to the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution is silenced".

It said that on the intervening night of August 4-5, 2019, Omar Abdullah was put under house arrest and it was later learnt that section 107 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973 was invoked to justify such arrest.

It said "similar orders of detention have been issued by respondents (authorities of union territory of Jammu and Kashmir) over the last seven months in a wholly mechanical manner to other detainees, which suggest that there has been a consistent and concerted effort to muzzle all political rivals".

The plea said there could be no material available to detain a person who has already been detained for previous six months and the "grounds for the detention order are wholly lacking any material facts or particulars which are imperative for an order of detention".

"In fact, a reference to all public statements and messages posted by the detainee during the period up to his first detention would reveal that he has kept calling for peace and cooperation - messages which in Gandhi's India cannot remotely affect public order," it said.

The plea said that at no point of time in his "prolific political career", he has resorted to or indulged in conduct unbecoming of a "conscientious public figure".

The grounds of detention against Omar Abdullah, chief minister of the state from 2009-14, claims that on the eve of reorganisation of the state he had allegedly made attempts to provoke general masses against the revocation of Articles 370 and 35-A.

Omar Abdullah, who has been junior foreign minister and commerce minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led Cabinet in 2000, was served with a three-page dossier in which he was alleged to have made statements in the past which were "subversive" in nature.

PSA Challenged In SC

invalid law which was enacted by Jammu & Kashmir Legislature in 1978 by virtue of the exclusive jurisdiction of J&K under Article 35-A.

According to the petition, more than 600 political activists have been detained for more than six months under the draconian and dead law which had lost its existence the day President of India abrogated Article 35-A from Chapter-III of the Indian Constitution.

The plea has sought directions to release all the detainees who were detained on or before August 5, 2019, when Article 370 was abrogated, and who have completed more than three months in detention without trial in Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir

"Direct the Union of India and the respondents to grant appropriate compensation to all the detainees who have completed six or more months in illegal detention in J&K/outside J&K under the detention order of J&K Public Safety Act, 1978, which had lost its existence as valid law," the plea said.

It has also sought directions to restore the statehood to J&K which was declared/ established as a State of Jammu and Kashmir in 1846 by the founding Maharaja Gulab Singh and continued as recognized state till 2019.

"Direct the respondents/Union of India to appoint Delimitation Commission in Jammu & Kashmir and hold fresh Assembly election in 2020 after delimitation of the constituencies in J&K so that confidence of the people in democracy, rule of law and Indian Constitution is not shaken by the enemies of peace and rule of law," the plea said.

Internet Snapped Over Geelani's

90-year-old Geelani deteriorated, they said. Adequate number of security forces have been deployed at vulnerable places in Kashmir to maintain law and order and prevent miscreants from fomenting any trouble.

Geelani's family said he has been ill for some time but his condition is stable.

Ex-Militant Found Dead

murder case and was currently on bail. The spokesman said photography and video recording of the crime spot was carried out and an Forensic Scientific Lab (FSL) team was called for the examination of the scene of the crime.

"Detailed search of the premises was also carried out. Police is also examining the CCTV footage in the area," the spokesman said, adding a case has been registered in this regard.

"We assure community members that investigation in the matter will be fast tracked, in a professional and impartial manner," he said.

Man Booked In Poonch

and creating law and order problem in Poonch district, they said.

Police said a first investigation report has been registered against him. Poonch Senior Superintendent of Police

Ramesh appealed to the people to use social media carefully and in a positive manner.

"Police once again warns all mischievous people that whosoever will attempt to instigate the public by spreading rumours and fake posts having the potential to disturb peace will be dealt with strictly under the law, and stern action will be initiated against them," he said.

Police have also appealed to the people of Poonch district to make proper use of social media and not to indulge in illegal activities.

400 million Social Media Users

employ industry leading technology to stop misuse as well as provide controls and ways to report issues – without sacrificing privacy."

At the same time, tech companies and civil rights groups say the new rules are an invitation to abuse and censorship, as well as a burdensome requirement on new and growing companies.

In an open letter to India's IT minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, executives from Mozilla Corp., GitHub Inc. and Cloudflare Inc. said the guidelines could lead to "automated censorship" and "increase surveillance." In order to be able to trace the originator of content, platforms would basically be required to surveil their users, undermine encryption, and harm the fundamental right to privacy of Indian users, they said.

Companies such as Mozilla or Wikipedia wouldn't fall under the new rules, the government official said. Browsers, operating systems, and online repositories of knowledge, software development platforms, are all exempt. Only social media platforms and messaging apps will be covered. (Bloomberg)

CB Charges 2 Notorious

mobile phone where the caller told him that his friend, 'George', was intercepted by customs officials at the Delhi airport with a huge sum of money as she was coming India to meet him, they said.

The caller told Zargar that all the cash 'Geroge' was carrying was seized and to get her released he should transfer money to various bank accounts, the officials said. Zargar was duped of Rs 82,05,883, they added.

A complaint was lodged by the victim following which an investigation was taken up, the officials said.

The accused were arrested from Delhi by a Crime Branch team with well-coordinated efforts and effective planning as the accused were frequently changing their locations to evade arrest, the officials said.

The investigation conducted has revealed that the arrested persons are members of a notorious cyber racket operating from Delhi. Various bank accounts of the accused were detected in which transactions worth crores of rupees have been made by defrauding the gullible people from different parts of the country, they said.

The investigation in the case is on to nab the other members of the gang. A preliminary charge sheet was produced in the court of law, the officials said.