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Man in Saudi Arabia dies of MERS virus, ministry says



AFP, Riyadh

A Saudi man has died of the coronavirus MERS and another has contracted the virus, the Health Ministry said on Saturday, bringing the kingdom's deaths from the virus to 39.

The man, who had previously been diagnosed with the SARS-like virus, died in the southwestern province of Asir, the ministry said on its website.

The other man who contracted the virus, 83, is in the same province, it said.

Saudi Arabia is the country worst hit by MERS, which has killed 46 people worldwide. Out of 89 people who have contracted the virus globally, 68 were registered in Saudi Arabia.

Experts are struggling to understand MERS –Middle East Respiratory Syndrome –for which there is still no vaccine and which has an extremely high fatality rate of more than 51 percent.

It is considered a cousin of the SARS virus that erupted in Asia in 2003 and infected 8,273 people, nine percent of whom died.

Like SARS, MERS is thought to have jumped from animals to humans, and it shares the former's flu-like symptoms –but differs by also causing kidney failure.