

Saudi Arabia reports two more deaths from MERS virus

22 April 2014



In this Thursday, Oct. 17, 2013, file photo, Egyptian Muslim pilgrims, some wearing masks as a precaution against the Middle East respiratory syndrome, pray after they cast stones at a pillar, symbolizing the stoning of Satan, in a ritual called "Jamarat," the last rite of the annual hajj, in Mina near the Muslim holy city of Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah sacked the country's health minister on Monday, April 21, 2014, amid a spike in deaths and infections from the virus known as the Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS. The official Saudi Press Agency carried the royal order that said Abdullah al-Rabiah was relieved of his post as Health Minister, and that Labor Minister Adel Faqih will temporarily take over the health minister's portfolio until a replacement is named. The statement said al-Rabiah is now adviser to the Royal Court. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil, File)

Saudi Arabia's health ministry says two more patients who contracted a potentially fatal Middle East virus related to SARS have died as the kingdom detected 17 new cases of the disease.

The ministry said on Tuesday that a chronically ill 73-year-old Saudi man died in Riyadh. The other victim, a 54-year-old Saudi man, died in Jiddah.

The deaths bring to at least 81 the number who

died in the kingdom since September 2012. The 17 new cases of the virus were detected in four cities, bringing to 261 the number of people infected.

On Monday, King Abdullah sacked the country's health minister without giving a reason.

The kingdom is scrambling to contain the spread of the coronavirus related to SARS known as the Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS.

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