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## Docs wary after studies show infertility effect of 'nilavembu'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Chennai:** The state government may be extolling the virtues of 'nilavembu kudi-neer,' a concoction of nine herbs possessing some anti-viral properties to help prevent flu and boost the immune system, but many doctors are shocked by reports in medical journals about infertility one of its prime ingredients can induce. This could be a matter of concern, they say, especially when people take just 'nilavembu', — as it is sold in a powder form — without the other ingredients in the concoction.

Ever since the state government recommended the use of the siddha drug as prevention and cure for all fevers, including dengue, many doctors have been poring over medical texts for the drug, *Andrographis paniculata*. "It is a matter of concern when studies are contradictory," said Indian Medical Association state wing president Dr T N Ravishankar.

While some animal studies show how it can boost immunity and increase platelet count, others have shown that it can increase risks of infertility in rats. "Some institutions like Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Cen-

### DMK slams TN govt over dengue deaths

Stepping up its attack on the AIADMK government over dengue deaths in Tamil Nadu, opposition DMK on Monday mocked chief minister K Palaniswami and his cabinet colleagues by caricaturing them as mosquitoes. In a cartoon, depicting Palaniswami and deputy chief minister O Panneerselvam as "mosquitoes", DMK mouthpiece 'Murasoli' on Monday also dubbed the duo as "betrayers". The opposition party said the cartoon it carried on the front page of its mouthpiece was previously being circulated on WhatsApp. The daily also prefixed the word "dengue" to the name of state health minister C Vijayabaskar. The DMK has been taunting the Palaniswami-led government as the "dengue regime". Palaniswami rubbished DMK's charge and accused it of politicising the issue. AGENCIES

tre have listed it as contraindicatory for patients taking anticoagulants and antiplatelet drugs," he said.

The problem of side effects arises when raw nilavembu powder is taken, said Dr Selvin Innocent Dhas, president of the Indian Siddha Medical Graduates Association. "Nilavembu can regulate sugar and is good for the liver. But when used as a poly-drug proportion like in nilavembu kudi-neer the negative impact is nullified," he said.

Other siddha medicine experts said there is no harm in mass distribution of the herbal preparation.

"As long as it is prepared the right way and distributed within three hours, there is no problem," said National Institute of Siddha

director Dr V Bhanumathi.

Members of the five-member committee sent to the state by the Centre to investigate the outbreak of dengue also said they would not recommend mass administration of nilavembu as it was not "standard treatment." They, however, refused to expand on it.

Infectious disease experts said they would not prescribe the drug. "There is no proven, clinically useful anti-viral component effective against dengue," said Dr Dilip Mathai, dean and professor of medicine at Apollo Institute of Medical Science and Research. "If the government is asking doctors to give herbs with a promise of helping patients, it will be unethical and illegal," he said.