

Monkeypox emergency may last for months, say experts

LONDON: Scientists advising the World Health Organisation (WHO) on monkeypox say the window is closing to stop its spread, with cases currently doubling every two weeks, raising concerns that it will take several months for the outbreak to peak.

WHO Europe has forecast just over 27,000 monkeypox cases in 88 countries by Aug 2, up from 17,800 cases in nearly 70 countries at the latest count.

Making predictions beyond that are complex, scientists said, but there is likely to be sustained transmission for months.

"It's clear the window of opportunity for doing so is closing," said Anne Rimoin, a member of the WHO expert committee on monkeypox that met last week to determine whether the outbreak constituted a global health emergency.

A majority of committee members voted against the move and, in an unprecedented step, WHO director-general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared an emergency anyway.

Beyond Africa, monkeypox is spreading chiefly in men who have sex with men.

"I remember clearly ... saying that 'I think I'm going to die,' because I can't eat, I can't drink. I can't even swallow my own spit," said Harun Tulunay, 35, a sexual health advocate who was hospitalised here earlier this month but has since recovered.

In **New York**, city authorities have asked WHO on Tuesday to rename the monkeypox virus to avoid stigmatising patients, who might then hold off on seeking care.

New York has seen more cases of the disease than any other city in the United States, with 1,092 infections detected so far.

"We have growing concern for the potentially devastating and stigmatising effects around the 'monkeypox' virus can have on... vulnerable communities," New York City public health commissioner Ashwin Vasan said in a letter to Ghebreyesus. **Agencies**