
8, Including Toddler, Die Collecting "Himalayan Viagra" In Nepal

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Kathmandu: At least eight people died while collecting rare medicinal fungus Yarsagumba, popularly known as the "Himalayan viagra", in Nepal's Dolpa district, police said in Kathmandu on Thursday.

Known for its aphrodisiac properties, Yarsagumba is only found in the Himalayan mountains above 10,000 feet.

At least eight people died in the last one week while collecting the unique caterpillar-fungus fusion. While five pluckers died of altitude sickness, two fell off a cliff while plucking the expensive fungus, police said.

A toddler accompanying his mother, who was collecting the herb, also died due to altitude sickness, they said.

Every summer, people come to search for the precious crop, which sells for over \$100 a gram across Asia and the US.

The local authorities have set up health camps at various places for facilitating the Yarsagumba collectors. Over a dozen pluckers are receiving treatment in these health camps, officials said.

Yarsagumba is a unique caterpillar-fungus fusion that occurs when parasitic mushroom spores infect and mummify a ghost moth larva living in the soil.

There are more than 70 highland meadows opened for Yarsagumba pickers in Dolpa district, situated 600 km north-west of Kathmandu.
