

Spider invasion spooks Indian village

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Professor Ratul Rajkhowa of the Department of Zoology of Cotton College, holds a dead spider that was the alleged species that killed two people in the north-eastern Indian state of Assam, in the department's laboratory in Guwahati. Panicked villagers in a remote Indian state complained of an invasion of giant venomous spiders that resemble tarantulas but are unknown to local specialists.

Panicked villagers in a remote Indian state complained Monday of an invasion of giant venomous spiders that resemble tarantulas but are unknown to local specialists.

Indian media said that a dozen people had been bitten and treated in hospital, with two unconfirmed deaths reported.

"Initially we thought it was a prank, but later on we saw [swarms](#) of this peculiar kind of spider biting people," Ranjit Das, a community elder in the town of Sadiya in the northeastern state of Assam, told AFP by telephone.

Authorities have swung into action by fogging and spraying [insecticides](#) in the area, 600 kilometres (370 miles) east of Assam's main city of Guwahati, and a team of scientists have been dispatched to investigate.

"We visited the spot and found it akin to the [tarantula](#), but we are still not sure what this particular species is," said L.R. Saikia, a scientist from the department of life science of Dibrugarh University in Assam.

"It appears to be an aggressive spider with its [fangs](#) more powerful than the normal variety of house spiders," he told AFP.

Specimens have been sent outside Assam for identification by arachnologists, he said.

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