

Press Release on 11 February 2003

DH monitors situation closely

The Department of Health is closely monitoring the situation in Hong Kong in relation to the high incidence of pneumonia cases in Guangzhou, the Director of Health, Dr Margaret Chan said today (February 11).

The Department has already contacted Mainland health officials to get more information. As it is the high season for respiratory diseases in the Mainland, consultation and hospital admission rates have risen significantly recently.

Initial reports showed that the cases were not anthrax or plague. When further laboratory results are available, DH would be informed, Dr Chan said.

In Hong Kong, the Department of Health operates an effective surveillance system. No unusual patterns of influenza-like illness and respiratory tract infection including pneumonia have been identified through the surveillance network of hospitals, clinics and laboratories in the public and private sectors.

She reminded members of the public to take steps to prevent influenza as we have entered the usual peak season for influenza in Hong Kong between January and March.

To prevent influenza, it is important to:

- * maintain good ventilation;
- * avoid crowded places;
- * observe good personal hygiene and wash hands after sneezing, coughing or cleaning the nose;
- * build up good body immunity by having a balanced diet, adequate exercise and rest; and
- * avoid smoking.

Travellers are also advised to observe these preventive measures.

Persons who fall sick are advised to seek medical advice early.

End/Tuesday, February 11, 2003