

## Excerpt



Health care workers outside an isolation ward at the Communicable Disease Centre

## All schools close as Sars claims first two lives

[SINGAPORE] For the first time in more than 50 years, the Ministry of Education has decided to close all national schools in response to deep public anxiety over the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Sars).

The announcement came as the mysterious virus claimed its first two lives over the last two days.

Said Education Minister Rear Admiral Teo Chee Hean: "On purely medical grounds, there are currently no strong reasons for closing all schools. However, principals and general (medical) practitioners have reported that parents continue to be concerned about the risk to their children."

Primary schools, secondary schools, junior colleges, centralised institutes, special education schools and madrasahs (religious schools for Muslims) will all be closed from today till April 6 in a move that affects 600,000 children. To make up for lost curricu-

lum time, the school term will be extended into the June holidays.

Universities, polytechnics and institutes of technical education will, however, continue to operate because their students are "older and better able to understand the situation and take the necessary statement."

Childcare and pre-school centres have also been advised to close. However, these centres will still accept children if their parents cannot find any other means of taking care of them. A nationwide school closure of this nature has not happened since the polio scare of the 1940s.

Meanwhile, two Sars patients in Tan Tock Seng Hospital's intensive care unit have died. The first – a male patient in his forties – was in intensive care for a week before succumbing to lung failure on Tuesday night. Details of the second death, which occurred last night, could not be obtained by press time. Nine patients are still in intensive care.

OCTOBER 8, 2003

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DECEMBER 16, 2003

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