

## South-East Asian leaders unite to combat SARS

On 29 April, the heads of member states of the Association of South-East Asian Nations Plus Three, meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, endorsed a set of procedures to combat SARS jointly. The procedures specify standardized screening for all travellers, isolation and treatment for identified SARS cases, and sharing of accurate and timely information.

Represented at the meeting were Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China (including Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam.

WHO's Director-General, Gro Harlem Brundtland, stressed the importance of sustained international cooperation in the fight against SARS. "It is now we have a chance to contain it, and we must use the public health tools that we have at our disposal," she said in a recent interview.

At the Bangkok meeting, David Heymann, WHO's Executive Director for Communicable Diseases told the heads of state that there were two simple strategies for containing and eventually stopping SARS: detecting all cases, and protecting those at risk of infection from those cases. "Meetings of this level and magnitude, to form a common strategy against a specific disease, show how serious countries are about becoming free of SARS," Heymann said. ■