

3rd flu death in US

Costa Rica reports first victim, China its first suspected case

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SNAPSHOT

The spread of swine flu



SEATTLE: The number of swine flu-related deaths outside Mexico has inched up to five with the United States reporting its third fatality and Costa Rica its first, both involving men who also had underlying illnesses.

The number of confirmed cases of the infection in the US has risen to 2,532 in 44 States, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported yesterday.

With 278 new cases, the CDC said 44 States of the nation's 50 States as well as the capital, Washington, have now been affected.

Washington State health officials said the victim there was a man in his 30s who had underlying heart conditions and viral pneumonia when he died last Thursday from what appeared to be complications from swine flu. The State Health Department said in a statement on Saturday that swine flu was considered a factor in his death.

"We're working with local and Federal partners to track this outbreak," said Washington State Health Secretary Mary Selecky.

The man was not further identified. He began showing symptoms on April 30 and was treated with anti-viral medication. Dr Gary Goldbaum, Snohomish Health District medical director, said medical officials hadn't been able to isolate any "risk factors" for the man to identify where he

might have been exposed.

The death of a 53-year-old man in Costa Rica last Saturday was the first involving swine flu outside North America. He also suffered from diabetes and chronic lung disease, the Health Ministry said.

Most of the victims in Mexico, where 48 people with swine flu have died, have been adults aged 20 to 49, and many had no reported complicating factors.

Previously, US authorities reported swine flu deaths of a toddler with a heart defect and a woman with rheumatoid arthritis, and Canadian officials said the woman who died there also had other health problems but gave

no details.

Mexico has been gradually lifting a nationwide shutdown of schools, businesses, churches and soccer stadiums.

But an upswing in suspected — though not confirmed — cases in parts of Mexico prompted authorities in at least six of the country's 31 States to delay plans to let primary school students return to class today after a two-week break.

Mexican health authorities released a breakdown of the first 45 of the country's 48 flu deaths that showed that 84 per cent of the victims were between the ages of 20 and 54. Only 2.2 per cent were immune-de-

pressed, and none had a history of respiratory disease.

In Canada, five new cases were reported yesterday, bringing the total number of people infected with the virus nationally to 286.

In Asia, a Chinese man returning from studying at a US university has become the first suspected case of swine flu in mainland China, the Health Ministry said yesterday.

The ministry identified the patient as a 30-year-old student surnamed Bao studying at an unspecified US school.

If confirmed, Bao's case would be the first in the mainland and China's second in the global outbreak. — AP