

# Bird flu claims two more lives

## Virus kills farmer in Vietnam and baby in Cambodia

**HANOI:** Vietnam reported its first human death from bird flu in nearly two years, as the virus also claimed the life of a toddler in Cambodia.

Concerns about avian influenza have risen in the region after China, in late December, reported its first fatality from the H5N1 virus in 18 months, but Vietnamese authorities said yesterday that there was no need to be alarmed.

"The bird flu situation is still within our control," said Le Minh Hung, a doctor from the Health Department of Ho Chi Minh City.

"Some healthcare teams have been sent to check on the situation in southern provinces."

The Vietnamese victim, who died on Jan 11, was a duck farmer from the southern Mekong delta province

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of Hau Giang, and experts were investigating whether the infection came from his flock.

It was Vietnam's first human death from the disease since April 2010.

In neighbouring Cambodia, a two-year-old boy from northwestern Banteay Meanchey province, who is thought to have been exposed to sick poultry, died on Jan 18 from the virus, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said.

The H5N1 strain of avian influenza has killed more than 340 people

worldwide since 2003, according to WHO statistics.

Vietnam has recorded one of the highest numbers of fatalities from bird flu in southeast Asia, with 59 deaths since 2003, according to the WHO.

In Cambodia, 17 people have died of H5N1, according to the UN agency.

All of Cambodia's eight bird flu cases last year were fatal – the last of them in August. Seven of the victims were children.

Indonesia, the country hardest-hit by bird flu, last week reported its third fatal case in three months.

Since early January, more than 3,000 birds have been culled in Vietnam's Mekong delta area. – AFP