

> From: William Meacham [REDACTED]
 > To: <cyril.chantler@scmp.com>; <sian.griffiths@scmp.com>
 > Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2003 11:40 PM
 > Subject: tracing of first SARS case in HK

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 >
 > > Dear Sir Cyril and Prof. Griffiths,
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 > > I did not manage to get this submission to your committee while it held
 > public
 > > meetings on the SARS outbreak. The attached file is a piece I published
 > in
 > the
 > > South China Morning Post regarding the early appearance of SARS in
 > Guangdong,
 > > and its eventual arrival in Hong Kong. It highlights a number of areas
 > where
 > > the HK Government probably failed actively and urgently to seek data
 > from
 > > Guangdong.
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 > > While researching this piece, I found that the most important and
 > seemingly
 > > very clearcut failure on the part of any public health official was
 > reported
 > > in the Washington Post article "Early SARS signals missed in HK" with a
 > > dateline of May 20, as follows:
 > >
 > > "According to Kwong Wah staff, the health department contacted [REDACTED]
 > sister,
 > > who lived in Hong Kong. They asked her whether she felt any discomfort,
 > but
 > > they didn't ask where Professor [REDACTED] was staying, the hospital source
 > said.
 > > They assumed that he was staying at his sister's home."
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 > > If true, this was a major mistake. Of course, nothing should be assumed
 > in
 > > tracing contacts. If the Dept of Health had ascertained that [REDACTED]
 > had
 > > stayed at the Metropole Hotel, anyone else reporting SARS-like symptoms
 > should
 > > then have been asked, among other things, if they had been to the
 > Metropole
 > > Hotel. The airport worker who brought the disease to Prince of Wales
 > would
 > > then have been identified as a SARS carrier and isolated. Perhaps the
 > > catastrophic outbreak at Prince of Wales could have been avoided or
 > much
 > > diminished.
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 > > I thought these facts and reports might be of interest to your
 > committee.
 > >
 > > Sincerely,
 > >
 > > William Meacham
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 > > William Meacham
 > > Hon. Research Fellow
 > > Centre of Asian Studies
 > > University of Hong Kong
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** The attached newspaper clipping, titled "How Hong Kong ignored weeks of signals that SARS was coming" published in SCMP on 23 May 2003, was withheld from disclosure.

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