

# News Corner

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## **NFAK's Death could have been avoided:**

As Nusrat Fàteh Ali Khan was buried in his native Pakistan, it was revealed in London that the death of the celebrated 48-year-old qawali singer could have been avoided. According to medical sources at the Cromwell Hospital in West London, where Nusrat died, the singer had contracted hepatitis B and C from infected dialysis equipment in Pakistan. Nusrat, whose mystical Sufi songs in praise of Allah had won him a following in the West, was diabetic who needed hospital dialysis treatment twice a week. He had been hoping for a transplant as soon as his health permitted. In the last 10 years, Nusrat experimented with the mix of qawali and Western music. Among his credits were the sound tracks of *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Dead Man Walking*, *Bandit Queen* and *Natural Born Killers*. He arrived at the Cromwell Hospital and sat "looking very ill in the waiting area" until he was recognised by a member of staff. The musician was examined and it was found that his liver had been "aggressively attacked" by hepatitis. One hospital source said:

"In this country we throw away bits of the equipment after use but at the hospital in Pakistan they had been re-used after an attempt at sterilization. They were obviously infected with someone else's blood. This is the scandal of Third World countries. The fact he was grossly overweight did not help with his medical condition." Said Dr. Suhail Ahrnad, Medical Director of Scribner Kidney Center and Dialysis Unit, University of Washington, Seattle, USA "Nusrat was my patient for a couple of years and I saw him again a few years back and knew (and told him so) that unless he changed his ways, he was not for long, I am more angry with people around him and him too, than sad."

## **WHO is deeply concerned by the health effects of the Forest Fires in South East Asia**

According to information received by the World Health Organization (WHO), the air pollution caused by the forest fires in Indonesia is at emergency levels and serious health problems are affecting and will continue to affect a large number of people in the region if the fires are not extinguished very soon and current meteorological conditions prevail. This particularly serious situation has already persisted for several weeks and the weather forecast is not favourable for the situation to change substantially. The longer the exposure to the air pollution, which is mainly caused by the accumulation of fine particles, the more serious the effects will be, particularly for vulnerable groups of the population, like people with chronic respiratory problems, infants and the elderly. In September only, the number of additional hospital admissions in Sarawak, Malaysia, alone were more than 26000. At this stage, WHO endorses the recommendations already made by the governments to lessen the health effects of air pollution, This includes wearing respiratory masks, staying indoors as much as possible, keeping windows and doors closed, and seeking medical advice when called for. It should be noted, however, that in view of the small size of the particles, home-made or other commonly available masks do not ensure complete health protection. The situation in Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia, shows extremely high concentrations of suspended particulate matter with aerometric diameter below 10 micrometer which can readily enter the lower respiratory tract. The health effects of this type of acute pollution include exacerbations of cough and lower respiratory symptoms with resulting increased use of bronchodilators by asthmatic patients, increase in hospital admission and in daily mortality. In addition, chronic effects such as chronic bronchitis are likely to follow.