

National Influenza Centre to be Set up

18 May 2009

DUBAI - The UAE will set up a National Influenza Centre (NIC) and is installing 20 more thermal scanners at all air, sea and land entry points in the country, Ministry of Health (MoH) officials said on Sunday.

Director General of the Ministry of Health, Dr Ali Ahmed bin Shakar said the MoH was awaiting recommendations from the World Health Organisation (WHO) for establishing the NIC that will have the capacity to do the confirmatory tests for all types of influenzas. A WHO delegation had evaluated the facilities at five UAE laboratories last week. They are expected to send a report soon for making any further requirement needed for upgrading one of the labs to be an NIC or building a new one for the purpose of disease surveillance and diagnostic tests. Officials said the primary confirmation for the new strain of influenza A H1N1 can be conducted at two laboratories in the country, while cases confirmed by them will have to be sent to the NAMRU-3 lab under the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office of the WHO in Cairo.

Abu Dhabi and Dubai airports were the first to install thermal scanners. Sharjah Airport has now installed a thermal scanner and is in the process of installing the second one. The rest of the mobile and fixed scanners recently procured by MoH will soon be installed at the other entry points before the end of May.

(Zawya)