

Alleged rape blamed on lack of staff

By ALISON WISEMAN

NURSES have blamed a lack of manpower on wards for the alleged rape of a 21-year-old mentally handicapped woman at Princess Margaret Hospital.

Staff morale at the hospital is said to be low after reports blamed poor nursing for the alleged attack on a patient which took place last Thursday night.

Vice-chairman of the Nurses General Union Peter Wong Hyo said that at the time of the incident just three nurses, including one student nurse, were in charge of 50 patients on the hospital's female medical ward.

Mr Wong, who works at the hospital, added: "The workload was especially busy that night with four patients coming from the emergency unit and two cardiac arrests.

"With all this going on it was very difficult for the nurses to pay special attention [to visitors]," he said.

But hospital chief executive Dr Tsang Chin-wa said although he did not blame the nurses, he did not believe that the problem was

attributable to a lack of staff.

Dr Tsang said: "It is really a case of striking a balance between the convenience of patients and visitors and the safety of the patients themselves.

"We may not need more manpower to implement a more strict security regime although any move must be considered carefully and not rushed because of this incident."

But Legislative Councilor and nursing staff representative Michael Ho Mun-ka said too much attention had been focused on hospital security in relation to last week's alleged attack.

Mr Ho said: "This has raised the question of how we should protect mentally handicapped people from being harmed."

"Although hospital security may be part of the problem we should not simply blame the nurses.

"This incident took place in one of our hospitals but it could quite easily have happened in some other institution and so we must address the problem of protecting the mentally handicapped in general," he said.