Week of Jun 28, 2004

BANGLADESH

Undiagnosed Flu-Like Illness in Bangladesh
An undiagnosed flu-like illness has been spreading across Bangladesh causing fever with acute diarrhea. The disease came in the wake of intermittent rains that caused flash floods in many areas of the country and scarcity of pure drinking water. Dhaka’s low-lying areas were also under water following heavy showers during the past two weeks. Children and newborns are particularly vulnerable to the disease, with high fever and running nose. Although the disease remits within three or four days, doctors have advised patients to be cautious about the recent reappearance of dengue fever. Since dengue has reappeared, some of the febrile illnesses might actually be dengue. According to the dengue study group of the Department of Disease Control of Health Directorate, dengue is an emerging public health problem in Bangladesh since the first outbreak in 2000.

Source:

Dengue Affects 114 People in Bangladesh -- 64 Patients Still Receiving Treatment
114 cases of dengue fever have been reported so far this season in Dhaka, with 62 patients still undergoing treatment. Mosquito control activities have been initiated by the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) in recent weeks. It is believed that the dengue situation in Dhaka is under control. An awareness campaign via electronic media is expected to be launched soon to educate people on the disease. For the past few years thousands of people in the country have been attacked by the disease on an annual basis, and 50 people died of the disease in 2003.

Source:

CHINA

China to Increase AIDS Testing--Many People May be Unaware of Their Infection
China will increase AIDS testing to find HIV-infected individuals who are unaware that they have the virus. China has 840,000 people infected with HIV and 80,000 with full-
blown AIDS. The United Nations' AIDS agency says the true figure could be higher, and is warning that 10 million could be infected by 2010 without more aggressive prevention. The government promised in April to provide free AIDS treatment for the poor and free testing for anyone who wants it. The lack of AIDS testing in Henan (a central province) resulted in tens of thousands of people infected by an unsanitary blood-buying industry in the 1990s. In some villages, nearly every family has a member with the virus. There are still a considerable number of people who donated blood who have not been tested. HIV is also spreading rapidly among sex workers.

Source:

HONG KONG

Hong Kong to Scale Down SARS Health Screening at Immigration Checkpoints. As the threat of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) recedes, the government of Hong Kong will scale down health screening measures at all immigration checkpoints. Hong Kong has been free from SARS since June 2003 and the decision was made after careful assessment of the threat. Travelers will no longer be required to submit health declaration forms. Body temperature check for travelers leaving Hong Kong will cease from 12 July although screening will be maintained for all in-bound travelers. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) killed almost 300 people in Hong Kong and infected more than 1,800 last year.

Source:

INDIA

Diarrhea Kills 17 People in Assam, India
17 people have died of diarrhea at Sonacherra Tea Estate in Assam's Haliakandi district (northeast India) during the past three days. An acute form of diarrhea has become epidemic in the tea estate. A medical team has been rushed to the area to investigate the situation and to provide treatment. The medical team will ensure that all precautionary measures are taken to prevent further spread of the disease. Lack of proper sanitation and contaminated drinking water are cited as the primary causes for the outbreak.

Source:

Encephalitis in Nagercoil, India Kills 10 People in 3 Days
Ten people, including a one-and-a-half year old child, have died of encephalitis during the past three days in the Nagercoil district (Nagercoil is the southernmost city in India and a district administrative center). 25 people have been admitted to the Thiruvananthapuram medical college. Although this is not an epidemic, special teams have been dispersed to Kapicaud, Unnamalikadai, Marthandam, Kuzhithurai, Manchalamoodu, Painkulam and Udachakotai, from where the disease is being reported.
PAKISTAN

25 Die of Cholera in Afghan Refugee Camp on the Pakistan Border
The death toll from the cholera outbreak in the Spin Boldak Afghan refugee camp (on the Pakistan border) reached 25 on 25 June 2004. The epidemic disease has so far affected mostly older people and children, but there is concern of a larger outbreak due to severe weather conditions (intense heat), water shortage, and lack of adequate medicine. Currently these factors are augmenting the death toll. It is important that the government of Pakistan address the situation by providing clean drinking water and proper medicines in the refugee camps to prevent further loss of life.

Source:

PHILIPPINES

Dengue Fever Cases Increase in Davao City, Philippines
The City Health Office (CHO) has recorded 22 deaths and at least 892 cases of dengue fever from January to May 2004, in Davao City (in Mindanao) affecting mostly children aged 6-15. CHO records show there were 649 dengue cases for the same five-month period last year, but 24 of the patients died. The rise in dengue cases usually comes with the rainy season. The areas hardest hit this year are the city districts of Talomo North and South, Buhangin and Sasa. The dengue virus is carried by Aedes aegypti mosquito, which thrives in stagnant water. The mosquito usually bites between 6-8 in the morning and 4-6 in the afternoon. The cycle of the virus peaks every three to four years. This year could be difficult in terms of dengue cases and unless the necessary preventive measures are taken, CHO expects dengue cases to rise this July.

Source:

Malaria Affects 122 People in South Cotabato, Philippines
The provincial government of South Cotabato (southern part of Mindanao) has intensified its operations against a malaria outbreak which affected 122 people in 5 municipalities over the last few weeks (no deaths have been reported). The malaria control program has quarantined several upland villages in the municipalities of Lake Sebu, T'boli, Tantangan, Tupi, and Banga to prevent the further spread of the mosquito borne disease. Of the 5 municipalities, barangays Ned and Halilan in Lake Sebu were hit hardest with at least 40 people already ill. Other areas placed under quarantine were barangays Kematu, Edwards, and Zigzag in T'boli; Tacub and El Ulit in Tantangan; sitio Mambusong in barangay Cebuano, Tupi; and sitio Lambukay in barangay Lamba, Banga. Areas reporting an increase in transmission have previously been regarded as low risk.

Source:
- Promed Mail, Jun 29, 2004,
THAILAND

Cholera Affects Nearly 100 People in Southern Thailand Province
Approximately 100 people in the Thai province of Satun (970 kilometers/600 miles south of Bangkok) have become ill with cholera. About 96 people have displayed symptoms of diarrhea and weakness caused by cholera since 3 June, while another 69 have tested positive for cholera but have not shown symptoms. Communicable disease control teams were sent to conduct tests on those afflicted and the people they came into contact with. Cholera is an acute bacterial infection of the intestine caused by ingestion of contaminated food or water. It usually causes mild diarrhea or no symptoms, according to the World Health Organization. In 5 –10% of cases, patients develop severe diarrhea and vomiting, leading to severe dehydration (and if not adequately treated, death).

Source:

VIETNAM

Six Vietnamese Provinces Affected by Avian Influenza During Past 3 Months
Six provinces in Vietnam have been affected by avian influenza since April, however the numbers are small and it is too early declare an epidemic. The flu that hit the country earlier this year returned in April and spread to five southern provinces and one central. It returned first in Dong Thap province, then in central Quang Ngai and Vinh Long. In June, Bac Lieu, Can Tho and Tien Giang were also contaminated. A flock of some 3,000 chickens had been destroyed in Bac Lieu province after an undisclosed number of birds had died suddenly. Samples were sent to the regional veterinary center in Ho Chi Minh City and were positive for H5 virus. Scientists have not yet been able to identify the virus strain but more research is underway. Vietnam, with 16 deaths, was the worst hit in human terms of eight Asian countries recently struck by the H5N1 strain of bird flu.

Source:

Health Ministry Considers Urgent Measures to Fight Dengue Outbreak in Vietnam
The Ministry of Health and southern provinces have discussed urgent measures to curb dengue fever, which is spreading across the country, especially in the Mekong River delta. By 22 June, more than 17 700 people had contracted the disease, and 33 had died. Within a month (19 May to 19 June 2004) more than 4000 infections were reported in 31 locations. Of these, 10 people died. Most of the dengue fever infections were children under 15 years old (92.3% of the total). Up to 80% of the infected patients died within 6 days after contracting the virus. Symptoms included enlarged liver, bloody vomit, and rash. The density of the mosquito population is high in An Giang, Can Tho,
HCM City, Dong Nai, and Long An. Among the 4 virus types (D1, D2, D3 and D4), this year virus type D2 was the major cause of about 70% of infections and the high mortality rate.

Source:

**Other World News**

**WORLD**

**Avian Influenza is Becoming More Lethal**

A new study suggests that Avian Influenza is becoming more dangerous each year. Scientists in China and the US injected mice with samples of avian flu virus (H5N1) which emerged in different years. They found that the newer forms (mutations) of the virus kill more rapidly than their predecessors. The concern is that this will increase the risks to humans. The researchers, whose work is reported in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, say more action is needed to try to curb the spread of the virus. According to the researchers, the virus has not yet acquired the most dangerous mutation (the ability to transmit human to human). As well as becoming more lethal, H5N1 is also now able to reproduce in more parts of the body than before. The trend towards more dangerous forms of the virus is one which the researchers believe will continue.

Source:

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