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## Speculated Deaths in IDP camps were “exaggerated”- WHO Representative

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Dr. Mehta WHO Representative says the deaths speculated in IDP welfare centers by some sections in media were “exaggerated”; The new Representative for the World Health Organization (WHO) in Sri Lanka, Dr. Firdosi Rustom Mehta presented his credentials to Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama today at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Presenting his credentials to the Foreign Minister, Dr. Mehta stated that the death rate speculated by some section in media due to the diarrhea disorder in some relief villages and camps accommodating the Internally Displaced Sri Lankans (IDSLs) were “exaggerated”. He pointed out that the actual figures were well within the accepted standards and informed that the WHO had also issued a clarification in this connection. He also stated that he had visited the camps over five times during the past three months and that during each visit, had found the situation to be “rapidly improving”. Commending the Government of Sri Lanka in this connection, he said that the Government should be given “full credit” for the efforts taken. Foreign Minister Bogollagama, welcoming Dr. Mehta, thanked him for clarifying the misinformation on the death rate attributed to the diarrhea disorder in some sections of the media and stated that the Government of Sri Lanka was continuing its efforts to improve the conditions in the camps. He also briefed Dr. Mehta on the discussions President Mahinda Rajapaksa had with the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon during the recently concluded Non Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit in Egypt where the situation in the IDP camps were also discussed. He further stated that Sri Lanka was associated with the NAM since 1952 and was among the founders of the Movement. Referring to the work done by the WHO in Sri Lanka, Dr. Mehta outlined the areas of concern for the WHO such as maternal and childcare, the outbreak of dengue, H1N1 and the situation of the IDPs in the camps. Discussing the incidents of dengue in Sri Lanka, Dr. Mehta, a Scientist, said incidents of dengue was on the decline. Minister Bogollagama commenting on the dengue situation also pointed out to the need to eradicate the mosquito menace effectively as it posed many health hazards and inconveniences to the public. He further stated that his constituency was one of the areas affected by this problem and explained the steps taken by the relevant authorities to eradicate this menace. He highlighted the need for the public to become socially conscious of the problem and its impact on the society. During the discussions, Dr. Mehta, commenting on the situation pertaining to the maternal and childcare in the IDP camps stated that the situation was also being monitored by the WHO and further stated that a survey would be done after three months to evaluate the situation. In respect of H1N1, he stated that the thermal scanners at the Bandaranaike International Airport were functioning well and that there were about 40 cases detected so far, mainly from tourists entering Sri Lanka. He added that medicines were also provided by the WHO to treat at least 300,000 patients at the Infectious Disease Hospital in Angoda. Additional Secretary, Mr. Prasad Kariyawasam and other senior officials also participated at the discussion. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Colombo

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