

## **Press Release**

### **WHO adopts new regulations to prevent spread of infectious diseases**

**Dhaka, 15 June 2007:** Today, the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) come into force, within the two years target set by the 58<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly that met in Geneva in May 2005. These regulations are relevant to keep pace with the changing health scenario of global health security. They are a contemporary, updated version of the International Health Regulations (IHR1969) which will afford maximum security against the international spread of diseases and public health events while ensuring minimum interference with international travel and trade.

Under IHR (2005) all Member States are expected to report to WHO within 24 hours of assessment any novel disease or event of public health emergency of international concerns (PHEIC). “The new IHR heralds an era of sharing information in real time among Member States. Thus, the global community will be alerted in a timely manner to mount a coordinated and effective response” said Dr Samlee Plianbangchang, Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region (SEAR).

To comply with the timely notification provision, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has already nominated Director, Disease Control, Directorate general of Health Services as a national IHR focal point who can liaise on all matters pertaining to IHR with the respective sectors of the national government and respond to the WHO’s process of notification and verification. Under IHR 2005, Member States must respond to WHO’s request for verification of information, irrespective of source or origins.

With technical support from WHO the GoB has already assessed core capacities for implementing IHR 2005 at some of the Upazila, District, Seaport and Airport in April 2007. There was an advocacy meeting on IHR 2005 for the multi-sectoral policy makers organized by the DGHS in collaboration with WHO, and planned for organizing sensitizing meeting on IHR for the multi-sectoral managers at all six divisions to implement IHR 2005. “The revised and broadened IHR 2005, which will come into force today will provide an important instrument to protect countries from global health destabilization, the scope has now expanded from just reporting on selected diseases to all events representing a public health emergency of international concern within 24 hours”, said Dr Duangvadee Sungkhobol, WHO Representative to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is in the process of strengthening its capacity for improving disease surveillance system, rumour verification, early warning and rapid response with investigation and intervention of disease outbreaks with laboratory backup support as a part of preparedness and response to Avian and Human pandemic influenza. The relevant parts of the health system must be further strengthened so the country can detect, diagnose, notify and take appropriate control and prevention measures for any event of Public Health Emergency of International Concerns. In addition, the country is expected to initiate the improvement of capacity of airports, sea ports and ground crossings where diseases can enter or leave the country.

The new IHR, which provides an opportunity for strengthening the national health system and human resources, also carries obligations to be fulfilled by Member States. Overall, it will ensure global health security by a collective response to local problems.

**For further information please contact: Dr Iqbal Kabir, National Consultant (Public Information); Tel:01199 888770 Or Dr Kamruzzaman Biswas, National Professional Officer (Epidemiology); Tel: 01199 816018**