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WHO to conduct survey on health conditions in IDP camps

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The World Health Organisation(WHO) will conduct a survey in various relief camps in Sri Lanka's North to check the health conditions of displaced Tamils, even as it described reports of the number of deaths due to diarrhea as "exaggerated".

Firdosi Rustom Mehta, new Representative for the WHO in Sri Lanka, said the situation pertaining to the maternal and childcare conditions in the IDP camps are being monitored by the organisation. He said a survey will be undertaken after three months to evaluate the situation.

Presenting his credentials to Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama yesterday, Mehta said "the death rate speculated by some section of media due to the diarrhea disorder in relief villages and camps housing the IDPs were exaggerated.

He pointed out that the actual figures of those affected due to the disease were well within the accepted standards and informed that the WHO had also issued a clarification in this connection.

The top WHO official said he had visited the IDP 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, Mehta said that the government should be given "full credit" for the efforts taken, a Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry statement said. Welcoming Mehta, Bogollagama thanked him for clarifying on the misinformation on the death rate attributed to the diarrhea disorder in some sections of the media, the statement said. The minister said the government is continuing with its efforts to improve the conditions in the camps.

Bogollagama also briefed 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.

Referring to the work done by the WHO in Sri Lanka, Mehta outlined the areas of concern for the WHO such as maternal and childcare, the outbreak of dengue, H1N1 and the situation of

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the IDPs in the camps.

Discussing the incidents of dengue, Mehta, a scientist, said incidents of dengue is on the decline in Sri Lanka.

Bogollagama said there is a need to eradicate the mosquito menace as it poses many health hazards and inconveniences to the public. He said public should become socially aware of the problem and its impact on the society.

In respect of H1N1 virus, Mehta stated that the thermal scanners at the Bandaranaike International Airport are functioning well and that there are about 40 cases detected so far, mainly from tourists entering Sri Lanka.

He said medicines were also provided by the WHO to treat at least 3,00,000 patients at the Infectious Disease Hospital in Angoda in Central Sri Lanka.