

## Myanmar along with SEAR Member States Certified Poliomyelitis Free

*H.E. Professor Pe Thet Khin, Union Minister for Health accepting a polio free certification and medal from the Regional Director, Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, at the WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia in New Delhi.*



**M**yanmar celebrated a landmark achievement in public health in March 2014 - the victory over polio.

Poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious viral disease, which mainly affects young children. The virus is transmitted through contaminated food and water, and multiplies in the intestine, from where it can invade the nervous system. Many infected people have no symptoms, but do excrete the virus in their faeces, hence transmitting infection to others. Initial symptoms of polio include fever, fatigue, headache, vomiting, stiffness in the neck, and pain in the limbs. In a small proportion of cases, the disease causes paralysis, which is often permanent. Polio can only be prevented by immunization by Oral Poliomyelitis Vaccine (OPV) or Inactivated Poliomyelitis Vaccine (IPV).

Myanmar Poliomyelitis eradication initiative started in 1996 with the first round of National Immunization Days throughout the country and in subsequent years immunization services reach every corner of the country. Initiation of surveillance of acute flaccid paralysis started in the latter half of 1996. After many years of high routine OPV coverage, supplemented by multiple rounds of national and sub-national immunization days and house to house mopping up, Myanmar

reported the last wild poliovirus in May 2007.

Myanmar along with SEAR Member states was Certified Poliomyelitis Free by the Regional Certification Commission for Poliomyelitis on 27 March 2014. A polio free certification and medal was received by the Honorable Minister of Health, Professor Dr. Pe Thet Khin, at the WHO SEA Regional Office in New Delhi.

Regional Certification Commission concluded, "From the evidence provided by the National Certification Committees of Member States, that the transmission of indigenous wild poliovirus has been interrupted in all countries of the Region. The commission declares today, 27 March 2014, that South East Asia region as poliomyelitis-free."

In order to sustain the Polio free status, Myanmar will have to maintain a uniform high OPV3 coverage in it is routine Immunization and continue sensitive surveillance for acute flaccid paralysis cases.

The Polio Eradication and Endgame Strategic Plan have been drawn for the period and under this new strategic plan and in order to sustain a Polio free world, there will be a switch from current trivalent OPV (tOPV) to bivalent OPV (bOPV) by removing the Type 2 component from the vaccine along with this, Myanmar will also introduce IPV in its routine Immunization program by 2015-2016.

## Commemoration ceremony of World Health Day 2014 in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar "Vector-borne diseases"



*Acting World Health Organization Representative to Myanmar, Dr Krongthong Thimasarn reads out the message of the Regional Director of WHO SEAR at the World Health Day 2014 commemoration ceremony at Nay Pyi Taw.*

The World Health Day 2014 commemorative ceremony was inaugurated by H.E. Professor Pe Thet Khin, Union Minister for Health, in the main conference hall. The ceremony was attended by, H.E. Dr Daw Thein Thein Htay, Deputy

Minister for Health, Directors-General, Deputy Directors-General and officials from the Ministry of Health, and other ministries, representatives of various international organizations, United Nations Agencies, non-Governmental Organizations, local press and other invited guests. H.E. Professor Pe Thet Khin, Union Minister for Health delivered a speech and Acting WHO Representative to Myanmar, Dr Krongthong Thimasarn read out the message of the Regional Director of WHO South East Asia Region.

After the opening ceremony the guests were invited to view a mini exhibition "Vector-borne diseases", in which photos of activities of the Ministry of Health and also information, education and communication materials such as World Health Day magazines, posters were shown.

A video show on "Vector-borne diseases in Myanmar" and a technical seminar were also held on the theme of the 2014 World Health Day in the Ministry of Health meeting hall. ■

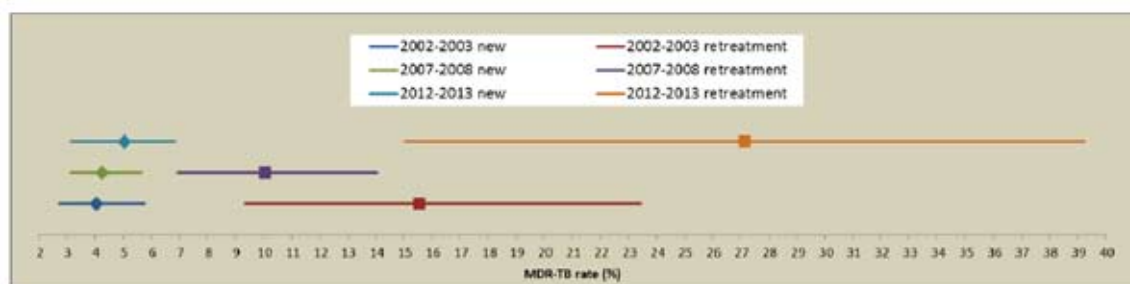
## Third nationwide tuberculosis (TB) drug resistance survey

The third nationwide TB drug resistance survey was undertaken during 2012-2013. Earlier surveys were conducted in 2004 and 2007.

There was a marginal (statistically non-significant) increase in Multi Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) among new cases (5% compared to 4% and 4.2% in previous surveys, with largely overlapping confidence intervals) and a significant increase in MDR-TB among retreatment cases (27.1% in 2012-2013 survey),

though the latter one may be attributed the small and less representative sample.

The objectives of the third survey included also to obtain updated information on the magnitude of MDR-TB, determine trends in MDR-TB epidemiology and explore MDR-TB risk factors. Sputum samples were collected at public health facilities from 30 clusters. In a multivariate analysis, MDR-TB was significantly associated with previous TB treatment (27.1%), living in Yangon Region (11.2%) and HIV positive status (19.8%). ■





## Multi Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) status and challenges in Myanmar, what are the hopes?

*Dr Michael Rich, Partners in Health/Harvard Medical School discusses new anti-TB drugs, Nay Pyi Taw, March 2014.*



An advocacy meeting for MDR-TB was held on 17 March 2014 in Nay Pyi Taw. It was organized by Ministry of Health (MOH) and WHO. A total of 125 people attended the meeting including: H.E. Deputy Minister for Health, Directors General and senior staff from MOH, Regional/State Health Directors and TB Officers, Township Medical Officers, Medical Superintendents, professors in respiratory medicine and HIV/AIDS, representatives from international and bilateral organizations, international and national nongovernmental organizations, and people affected by the disease.

In her opening remarks, H.E. Dr Thein Thein Htay, Deputy Minister, highlighted that TB is a priority disease in the MOH's five-year national strategic plan. The government is gradually increasing the budget for TB control, including for procurement of second-line anti-TB drugs (600 MDR-TB treatments in 2014). She was concerned about the increasing trend of MDR-TB, the limited number of reference laboratories, the delay in second-line anti-TB drug procurement and the increasing number of patients waiting for treatment. She supported the formation of drug resistance committees in every region, state and

district to guide and coordinate the activities of government and partners to ensure successful management of MDR-TB.

Presentations were made on the global status of TB and MDR-TB, new anti-TB drugs (bedaquiline and delamanid) and current WHO recommendations for MDR-TB treatment; TB epidemiology and control in Myanmar; achievements of National Tuberculosis Programme (NTP), progress towards reaching the TB-related Millennium Development Goals; and the challenge to find the missing cases. The funding situation was also reviewed.

Two shorter regimens for MDR-TB were discussed: the "Bangladesh regimen" as applied in Bangladesh and several African countries; and the STREAM study, a randomized control trial currently undertaken in several Asian and African countries. The importance of new and repurposed anti-TB drugs in late phase of clinical development (Phase II or III trials) and their inclusion in combination therapy for MDR-TB and extremely drug-resistant tuberculosis were also discussed.

Yangon is characterized by an exception high burden of TB as well as MDR-TB, necessitating special interventions. ■



## Ceremony

**T**he Ministry of Health, Myanmar, in close collaboration with WHO, organized the official commemoration ceremony of the World No-Tobacco Day 2014 at the conference hall of the Ministry of Health, Nay Pyi Taw on 31 May 2014. The ceremony was attended by the H.E. Union Minister for Health, Prof Pe Thet Khin, Directors-General and senior officials from the Ministry of Health and other ministries, representatives from the Myanmar Women Affairs Federation, Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association and other non-governmental organizations.

First, Prof Pe Thet Khin, H.E. Union Minister for Health gave a speech highlighting the progress of tobacco control programme in Myanmar being carried out by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with WHO. He mentioned some key facts on tobacco epidemic and related morbidity and mortality due to use of tobacco. He gave special emphasis on the need to raise tobacco taxes in order to reduce tobacco consumption and to curb tobacco epidemic. He called for cooperation of various departments, non-governmental organizations in national tobacco control efforts. Later, Dr Krongthong Thimasarn, Acting WHO Representative to Myanmar, read out the message from Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, the Regional Director for WHO South East Asia Region on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day 2014. In the message, the Regional Director highlighted the Regional situation on

prevalence of tobacco use both in smoking and smokeless forms. She quoted the facts from studies that increase in tobacco taxes could significantly reduce tobacco consumption both in high income countries and low- and middle-income countries. She emphasized the need to make not only the cigarettes but also other tobacco products less affordable in order to reduce death and illnesses related to tobacco. Dr Krongthong Thimasarn also added some highlights on country's recent achievements in tobacco control and announced that Professor Nay Soe Maung, Rector of University of Public Health received the Regional Director's appreciation Award for World No-Tobacco Day 2014. After the ceremony, the dignitaries and invited guests viewed the mini-exhibition displayed by the Tobacco Free Initiative Programme of the Ministry of Health featuring various tobacco control activities that took place in the recent years.

On 6 June 2014, the University Public Health organized, in collaboration with WHO, the World No-Tobacco Day 2014 event at the above university in Yangon. It was attended by H.E. Minister for Social Affairs and H.E. Minister for Finance of Yangon Region. Dr Krongthong Thimasarn, Acting WHO Representative to Myanmar, delivered the WHO South-East Asia Regional Director's appreciation Award on World No-Tobacco Day 2014 to Prof Nay Soe Maung at the event. A community talk session on Tobacco Control followed the official ceremony. ■

## WHO Regional Director's Appreciation Award for World No-Tobacco Day 2014

**P**rof Dr Nay Soe Maung, Rector, University of Public Health receives the "WHO Regional Director's Appreciation Award for World No-Tobacco Day 2014". The Citation of the Award describes that "Professor Nay Soe Maung has been working relentlessly for tobacco control in the Republic of Union of Myanmar. He has conducted advocacy and media campaigns on tobacco control for many years. He is a strong advocate on addressing tobacco industry interference with tobacco control in Myanmar. The World Health Organization acknowledges, with deep appreciation, the outstanding contribution of Professor Dr Nay Soe Maung, which are worthy examples for others to follow." ■

### important dates

28 July 2014	World Hepatitis Day
28 September 2014	World Rabies Day
29 September 2014	World Heart Day