

## OVERVIEW

Public criticism over the quality of healthcare mounted following reports that a premature baby died in the capital from respiratory complications after allegedly being turned away from several hospitals. Despite being eligible for free health services for underprivileged residents, the newborn was reportedly turned away from 10 hospitals, with some claiming not to have the right equipment and others saying they were fully occupied. The Jakarta administration and the Health Ministry were quick to pledge the establishment of an integrated database of hospitals to assist in finding out the availability of rooms and facilities, but questions remain on whether the government is able to provide medical coverage for all income brackets.

With most of the country deep into the rainy season, dengue fever continues to be a potent health risk. Outbreaks of the disease often peak during the wet season because of the abundance of free-standing pools of water that allow the dengue-carrying *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes to breed. The populous regions of East and Central Java have recorded at least 22 fatalities from the virus so far this year, with the combined number of infections already pushing more than 2,000.

The country also continues to be beset with other health problems. Indonesia reportedly has the third-highest rate of tuberculosis infection in the world, and is also the third-highest in the world in terms of leprosy infections. The country also faces possible failure in reducing the prevalence of malnutrition among toddlers to 15% by 2015, as targeted in the UN's Millennium Development Goals. Funding shortages have left many regions to struggle with inadequate facilities and medical staff, while a lack of proper education on health issues causes low public awareness, especially in rural areas. Indonesia still has a lot to do to improve healthcare in line with its status as an emerging middle-income country.

### Diseases of current concern include the following:

**Bird Flu** – To date, of the 192 cases of H5N1 reported in Indonesia since 2005, 160 have been fatal. The virus is endemic in fowl across the country and the close proximity of humans and birds makes this an extraordinarily difficult disease to stamp out. Nevertheless, there is no evidence to suggest the disease is mutating to allow human-to-human infection which would create the preconditions for a pandemic. The number of cases in Indonesia, at 10 for 2012, was well down from the peak level of infections in 2009. No fatalities have been reported so far this year.

**Dengue Fever** – Dengue is a viral disease spread through infected mosquito vectors of the *Aedes aegypti* variety. It is common throughout Indonesia with peak infections occurring in the wet season (typically September – March), although urbanization is resulting in infections throughout the year. Doctors say they believe the range of vectors is now increasing to include most types of mosquitoes. The disease can be fatal, especially among children, if not treated quickly. Early symptoms are often indistinguishable from a number of other diseases, including typhoid, which are also common in Indonesia.

**Malaria** – Malaria is caused by a parasite called plasmodium, which is transmitted via the bites of infected mosquitoes. It causes high fevers, shaking chills, flu-like symptoms, and anemia. Five species of plasmodium can infect humans. Severe disease is largely caused by *P. falciparum* while sickness caused by *P. vivax*, *P. ovale* and *P. malariae* is generally a milder form that is rarely fatal. The zoonotic species *P. knowlesi* causes malaria in macaques but can also cause severe infections in humans. There is no vaccine to prevent the disease though a variety of medications are available to help prevent and treat it. Resistance has developed to several anti-malarial drugs, most notably chloroquine and artemisinin.

**Rabies** – A viral disease that causes acute encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) in mammals. It is most commonly caused by a bite from an infected animal. If left untreated it is almost invariably fatal. In the early stages of rabies, the symptoms are malaise, headache and fever, while in later stages it includes acute pain, violent bodily movements, uncontrolled excitement, depression and the inability to swallow water. Rabies kills around 55,000 people a year, mostly in Asia and Africa. It can be prevented by vaccination, both in humans and animals.

**Tuberculosis** – An extremely common and potentially deadly infectious disease caused by mycobacteria. It most commonly attacks the lungs but can also affect the central nervous system, the lymphatic system, the circulatory system, the genitourinary system, bones, joints and even the skin. Over one-third of the world's population has been exposed to the TB bacterium, and new infections occur at a rate of one per second. Not everyone infected develops the full-blown disease and latent TB infection is the most common form. One in 10 latent infections will progress to active TB, which, if left untreated, kills more than half of its victims. The disease is currently causing concern in many areas of Indonesia and all domestic staff should be checked for the disease.

**Diphtheria** – Diphtheria is an acute infectious disease caused by the bacteria *Corynebacterium diphtheriae*. Diphtheria spreads through respiratory droplets of an infected person or someone who carries the bacteria but has no symptoms. Diphtheria can also be spread by contaminated objects or foods (such as contaminated milk). Diphtheria typically causes a sore throat, fever, swollen glands and weakness. The infection causes a gray-to-black, tough, fiber-like covering in the back of the throat which can block the airways. In some cases, diphtheria may first infect the skin, producing skin lesions. Risk factors include crowded environments, poor hygiene and lack of immunization. Treatment includes a diphtheria antitoxin injected into a muscle or through an intravenous drip (IV). The infection is then treated with antibiotics, such as penicillin and erythromycin. Hospitalization is often necessary.

## HEALTH INCIDENTS FOR FEBRUARY

### POLICY

**Jakarta to establish integrated medical call center, online system:** The Health Ministry and the Jakarta Health Agency will establish a call center to provide patients with information on the availability of medical facilities in their areas. Health Minister Nafsiah Mboi on February 22 said that all hospitals in Jakarta will be connected to the database of the '119' call center, which is expected to be operational on March 1. "An operator will search for hospitals based on the specifications of the callers. If it is urgent, the agency's ambulances will pick up the patients," she said. Separately, Jakarta Governor Joko Widodo on February 20 said his administration will establish an integrated online system

for hospital services that will help patients directly monitor the facilities and availability of hospital rooms in Jakarta. He said the online system should help maximize the limited number of medical facilities and hospitals in the city. "Many people still complain of not receiving good health services although they are enrolled in the Jakarta Health Card Program (KJS)," he added. The governor also said his administration will build more local health centers and expand free medical coverage. The state of health services in Jakarta has come under scrutiny after a one-week-old baby died on February 17 from respiratory complications after allegedly being turned away from 10 hospitals. Dera Nur Anggraini was born prematurely with her twin sister Dara on February 10 with a throat deformity that obstructed her breathing, said father Elias Setya Nugroho. He said his family searched for treatment but was turned away from 10 hospitals, with some



claiming not to have the right equipment and others saying they were fully occupied. Nugroho said the baby died after being taken back to Zahira Hospital in South Jakarta where she was born. The sandal vendor said a private hospital asked for a down payment of Rp15 million, even though the family held a health card that entitles low-income earners to free health services. Health Minister Nafsiah Mboi said the baby who died would have had little chance of survival. "The baby was born weighing just 1 kg, so she had little chance of survival. Usually babies are around 3 kg when they're born," she said. But the minister admitted Jakarta was under-resourced to handle complications with newborns. There are only 10 neo-natal intensive care units (in Jakarta) and they were all full, Mboi added.

**Analysis:** The latest initiatives from the Health Ministry and the Jakarta administration to improve the quality of health services in the capital appear to have been spurred by public outrage over the death of the newborn. Regardless of the infant's chances of survival, the plight of the one-week-old baby is another black mark on the state of healthcare in Indonesia. This case, if accurate, is especially disturbing, although sadly not uncommon. Indonesian hospitals, including state-funded ones, are renowned for their lack of charity when it comes to patients with no money to pay for treatment. At most private hospitals, a substantial cash deposit is usually required before a patient will be admitted, even if they are critically ill. In this case the government also appears to be at fault because of the apparent failure of the free health insurance for the poor scheme to work as designed. A similar incident reportedly occurred earlier in February when a young female college student who jumped out of a public minivan over fears she was being abducted was initially refused emergency care at a hospital because she couldn't pay a Rp12 million deposit. She died after several days at another hospital. There are frequent reports of hospitals refusing to release mothers and their newborn babies because they cannot afford to pay for delivery and other medical costs. A woman who has to have a baby by caesarian section, for instance, is likely to



face a bill of around \$900, an extraordinary large amount of money for the poor. According to the law, poor patients who are not listed as policy holders of the health insurance plan for the poor, Jamkesmas, are instead supposed to become the responsibility of the provincial or the district government. While an integrated database of all hospitals in Jakarta will assist in finding out the availability of rooms and facilities, the government should make sure that no patient needing emergency care is turned away from hospitals due to financial reasons. This issue will be a key test for Governor Joko Widodo, who campaigned heavily last year on promising to provide access to free healthcare for all underprivileged residents.

**NU, family planning body push for higher marriage age:** The country's largest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN), have urged lawmakers to increase the legal age of marriage. NU and BKKBN said the current legal marriage age of 16 years under the 1974 Marriage Law is no longer relevant. NU chairman Said Aqil Siradj on February 13 said women should ideally be married after 18 years of age, even though the Law on Child Protection considers a 20-year-old to still be a child. "We took the middle age between 16 and 20, so that it's fair. But this is just my opinion. We will discuss this internally and we will draft input for a revision to the Marriage Law," Siradj said. Sudibyo Alimoeso, the acting chief of BKKBN, voiced concern over Indonesia's high maternal mortality rate, which recently reached 17,520 cases per year. He cited child marriages as one of the contributing factors to the figure. The BKKBN has established an information and counseling campaign to provide information about the risks of childbirth for sexually immature women, though the program has only been introduced in non-Islamic schools. "That's why we wanted to work with NU, so information centers could be set up at Islamic boarding schools," Alimoeso said. National Commission for Child Protection (KPAI) secretary Maria Advianti welcomed the move, saying the commission and NU will soon submit the proposed revisions for the Marriage Law to the House of Representatives. Though the country has seen a major decline

in the number of child brides, 22% of Indonesian women aged 20 to 24 were married before the age of 18, according to the UN.

**Analysis:** NU as one of the more moderate Muslim organizations in the country can play a significant role in helping to end child marriages, which pose life-threatening health consequences. The 2012 UN report states that child brides are at risk of sexually-transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS, have limited access to and use of contraception, and have a 50% greater risk of delivering stillborn babies than women giving birth in their twenties. Despite BKKBN's statement that it has been campaigning against child marriages in non-Islamic schools, sex education is still officially not part of the country's national curriculum. Conservative religious groups have reacted negatively to including sex education in schools, claiming it might encourage students to commit adultery. Nevertheless, a stronger legal framework and greater access to information on the dangers of premature marriages are needed to address a number of problems.

**NU establishes halal certification body:** The country's largest Muslim organization, Nahdatul Ulama (NU), through its central executive board (PBNU), on February 6 launched a body authorized to issue 'halal' (allowed under Islamic law) certifications for consumable products, medicine and cosmetics. PBNU chairman Said Aqil Siradj said the NU Halal Body (BHNU) will not compete with other established bodies in issuing halal certifications. The establishment of BHNU is to answer the demand from entrepreneurs and consumers who are members and supporters of NU, Siradj said. BHNU chairman Maksum Mahfudh said the new body also aims to protect NU-based economic activities. BHNU has partnered with state surveyor company PT Sucofindo in processing halal certifications. Both sides signed a memorandum of understanding on January 30. Siradj said Religious Affairs Minister Suryadharma Ali has expressed his appreciation for the establishment of BHNU, saying the certification of halal products should not be monopolized. Siradj said BHNU was also approved by chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Sahal Mahfudz, who is also an NU official. MUI, the country's highest authority on Islamic affairs, operates a halal certification program under its Food, Drug and Cosmetics Assessment Agency (LPPOM). Graft watchdog Transparency International Indonesia (TII) in January cited the MUI as an institution involved in bribe taking, especially in its halal certification operations. TII researcher Frenky Simanjuntak said around 10% of 171 companies in the food and cosmetics sector, which were questioned in a survey, claimed to have been required to pay bribes to receive their MUI halal certification.



**Construction begins on hospital for workers in N. Jakarta:** The State-Owned Enterprises Ministry on February 22 began the construction of a hospital in North Jakarta that will specialize in providing healthcare services for workers. "The construction is expected to be completed in six months. The hospital is scheduled to open on August 17 to coincide with Independence Day," said State-Owned Enterprises Minister Dahlan Iskan. Iskan said the hospital is being built at the Kawasan Berikat Nusantara industrial estate on Jl. Raya Cakung in North Jakarta. The eight-floor hospital will have 184 beds and modern facilities including an intensive care unit. "Around Rp110 billion has been allocated for the project, including Rp5 billion for ambulance procurement," he said. The hospital project was ordered by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono last year to appease an increasingly assertive labor movement that has been demanding more social services for low income earners. The hospital is being supported by six state companies, including state pension and insurance company PT Jamsostek and state health insurance company PT Askes. The Public Housing Ministry said it plans to build a housing complex for workers next to the hospital.

## DENGUE FEVER



**Thirteen die, over 1,300 infected with dengue fever in E. Java:** Dengue fever has infected more than 1,300 people, killing 13, in East Java since the beginning of the year, health officials said. In Malang regency, five deaths from 267 infections were reported since the beginning of 2013. The fatalities occurred in the districts of Turen, Tajinan, Sumberpucung and Kepanjen, while most of the infections were recorded in the districts of Kepanjen, Lawang and Paksi. More dengue fever infections have occurred in Malang so far this year than during all of 2012, when 173 infections were recorded, said Malang Health Agency official Lulus Condro Trikoratno. In Kediri regency, three people died and 272

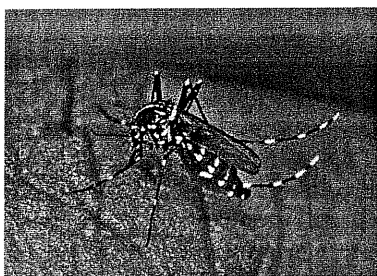
others were infected with the disease throughout January, Kediri Health Agency official Etik Sri Rahayu said on February 4. Rahayu said dengue fever cases have been reported in 26 districts in the regency. The figure was four times the rate during the same period last year, when 65 cases and one fatality were reported. The health agency expects the peak of the typical five-year dengue fever cycle in the regency to occur this year. Meanwhile, two fatalities from dengue fever were recorded in Sumenep regency, where the disease had infected 369 people from the beginning of the year until February 8, according to local officials. Anugerah Rizka Rahadi from the regency's Health Agency said infections had emerged in all 27 districts of the regency. Dengue fever has also claimed one life and infected more than 100 people since the beginning of the year in the provincial capital Surabaya. Surabaya Health Agency official Esty Martiana said on February 18 that 101 dengue fever infections were recorded during January, up from 90 cases in the same period of 2012. She said no fatalities were reported in January compared to two in January 2012. The number of dengue fever infections continued to increase in February, resulting in one death, Martiana said. She said the peak of the dengue fever infections is expected between March and April. In Jember regency, a toddler died and 162 others were infected with the mosquito-borne disease in January, Jember Health Agency official Yumarlis said on February 1. Yumarlis said dengue fever cases have been reported in all 31 districts in the regency. The fatality occurred in Temporejo district. The agency recorded 260 cases of dengue fever throughout 2012. In Bangkalan regency on Madura Island, dengue fever infected 68 people, a sharp increase from 19 cases registered in the same period last year. Meanwhile, a dengue fever emergency was imposed in Pamekasan regency on February 12 following an outbreak of the disease that spread to all districts in the regency, causing one fatality and at least 63 infections.

**Analysis:** With most of the country deep into the wet season, an increase in mosquito-borne diseases was to be expected. Outbreaks of dengue fever often peak during the wet season because of the abundance of stagnant water that allows the dengue-carrying *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes to breed. Subscribers are advised to take extra precautions, such as using Abate powder in any freestanding pools of water or ponds and using repellents. Medical attention should be sought immediately for any fever lasting more than two days or abdominal pain, the most common dengue fever symptoms. There is no preventative medication for the disease and there is no specialized treatment, though hospitalization is usually necessary. Preventing mosquito bites is the only way to protect against getting the virus.



**C. Java: Dengue fever kills nine, infects hundreds:** Dengue fever has claimed at least nine lives and infected hundreds of people in Central Java, health officials said. In Demak regency, three deaths and 106 infections of dengue fever have been recorded since the beginning of the year. Demak Health Agency spokesman Sukardjo said on February 24 that the number showed a sharp increase compared to 43 cases and no fatalities in the same period last year. The fatalities were recorded in Gajah village in Gajah district,

Tridonorejo village in Bonang district and Ngaluran village in Karanganyar district. In the provincial capital of Semarang, dengue fever has killed two people and infected over 400 since January. Semarang Health Agency head Widoyono said most of the infections occurred in the districts of Mijen, Gunungpati and Ngaliyan. In Pati regency, the local health agency recorded 140 dengue fever cases and two fatalities so far this year. Also in Central Java, over 130 dengue fever infections and one death were recorded in Cilacap regency since the beginning of 2013. The worst-affected areas are the districts of South Cilacap, Central Cilacap and North Cilacap. In Temanggung regency, one person died and 13 others were infected with dengue fever since the beginning of this year. Meanwhile, 17 sub-districts in Magelang regency have been declared endemic for the virus. Magelang Health Agency head Pantja Kuntjara on February 20 said 19 dengue fever cases were recorded in the regency since the beginning of the year.

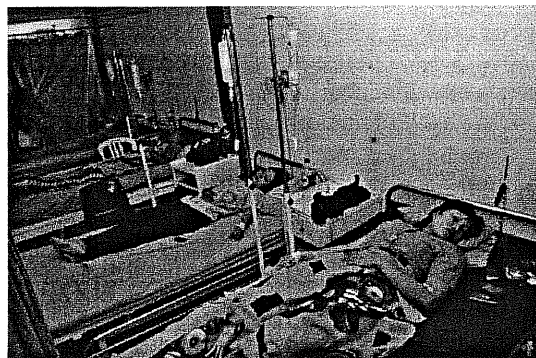


**Four die from dengue fever, hundreds infected in Yogyakarta:** Four people have died and over 400 others have been infected with dengue fever in areas of Yogyakarta since the beginning of the year. Two people died and at least 181 people have been infected with dengue fever in Bantul regency. Bantul Health Agency official Budi Nurrohman said on February 27 outbreaks were reported in almost every district in the regency. The majority of the infections occurred in Sewon, Kasihan and Banguntapan districts. In neighboring Sleman regency, two people died while 133 others were infected with dengue fever. Sleman Health Agency head Maflindati Nurani said on February 20 that dengue fever

outbreaks have occurred in 14 of the 17 districts in the regency, with Depok and Godean the worst-affected areas. Around 230 dengue fever cases were recorded in Sleman in 2012, up from 180 in 2011. In the municipality of Yogyakarta, 125 people have been infected with the mosquito-borne disease since the beginning of the year. The infections were mostly found in the districts of Umbulharjo, Kotagede and Wirobrajan.

**West Java dengue death toll at one:** Dengue fever has claimed one life and infected dozens of people since the beginning of 2013 in Tasikmalaya regency. Tasikmalaya Health Agency Official Sudana Machmud said on February 7 the fatality was a five-year-old boy from Cineam district. Machmud said the high number of infections was partly caused by recent flooding in the regency and improper sanitation among residents. He said most of the infections were recorded in Cineam and Sukarame districts. Last year, the Tasikmalaya Health Agency recorded 265 infections of the virus.

**Dengue fever kills four, infects hundreds in regions:** At least four people have been killed and over 400 others have been infected with dengue fever in several regions, health officials said. In Central Kalimantan, the disease has caused 150 infections and four fatalities in West Kotawaringin regency, local health agency head Indrawan Sakti said on February 3. Three of the fatalities were reported in Pangkalan Bun, the capital of West Kotawaringin regency, while another was reported in South Arut district, said Sakti. Officials will intensify prevention programs and conduct counseling to improve residents' awareness of the disease. Meanwhile, a dengue fever emergency was imposed in East Kotawaringin regency in Central Kalimantan after the disease claimed one life and infected 71 other people. In East Kalimantan, dengue fever has infected 175 people in Balikpapan between January 1 and February 24. Dengue fever outbreaks were also reported in Bangka Belitung with one fatality in Pemali district, Bangka regency.



**Five killed, 220 infected with dengue fever in S. Sulawesi, E. Nusa Tenggara:** Dengue fever claimed five lives and infected more than 220 people in South Sulawesi and East Nusa Tenggara since January, local health officials said. Two of the fatalities and a total of 74 infections were recorded in Bone regency, South



Sulawesi, Health Agency head Alimuddin said on February 10. Residents blamed the fatalities on the regional health agency's lack of preventive measures and its sluggish response to the outbreak. Also in South Sulawesi, a nine-year-old boy died and 73 people were infected with dengue fever in Palopo regency. The fatality occurred in Tobulung sub-district, Bara district. In East Nusa Tenggara, dengue fever claimed two lives and infected 75 people in Sikka regency. Sikka Health Agency head Delli Pasande attributed the deaths to delayed treatment, adding that families are often too slow to take patients to hospital. Officials are conducting prevention programs and counseling to improve residents' awareness of the disease and to improve sanitation.

**Spread of dengue fever in E. Jakarta blamed on floods:** Authorities in East Jakarta have registered an increase in dengue fever cases following widespread floods in the capital in January. At least 433 residents have been infected with the disease since the beginning of the year, up from 355 cases in the same period last year. Most of the patients lived in areas that were affected by the floods in January, East Jakarta mayor HR Kresdianto said on February 28.

## HIV/AIDS



### Health Ministry slams UNAIDS report on HIV/AIDS:

The Health Ministry and health activists on February 5 denounced a biennial report published in 2012 by the UN that stated Indonesia has experienced setbacks in dealing with HIV/AIDS. The report, published in November last year, gave Indonesia a "red mark" due to a 25% increase in HIV/AIDS infections from 2001 to 2011, putting Indonesia in the same category as Bangladesh, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. Other countries, such as Malawi, Botswana and South Africa, showed a decrease in HIV/AIDS infections of up to 75% during the same period. The report was incorrect because it used many flawed global indicators, Health Minister Nafsiah Mboi said. The UNAIDS report stated

one of the factors which had triggered the increase in infections in Indonesia was a lack of healthcare programs by the government for commercial sex workers. Mboi said the UN findings were "embarrassing," especially in light of large expenditures on HIV/AIDS prevention programs in Indonesia. An HIV/AIDS activist from the University of Indonesia, Zubairi Djoerban, said several of the criteria by the UN were questionable. However, the report commended Indonesia for progress in the early detection of HIV/AIDS infections by health officials. UNAIDS country coordinator for Indonesia, Cho Kah Son, defended the report, saying it showed a minor decrease in progress in mitigating HIV/AIDS, not major setbacks. There were also achievements by the government, which were stated in the report, Son added.

**NGO grants Rp2.7B for HIV/AIDS prevention in W. Sumatra:** The Global Fund, an international aid organization focusing on preventing and treating AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, has donated Rp2.7 billion to mitigate HIV/AIDS in West Sumatra. West Sumatra Deputy Governor Muslim Kasim on February 18 said the donation will be gradually disbursed until 2015 in several regions of West Sumatra, which recorded the 10th highest number of HIV/AIDS infections out of all 33 provinces in 2012. The money will be used to support HIV/AIDS mitigation programs and form AIDS Prevention Commissions (KPA) in eight regencies and cities in the province, Kasim said. Kasim cited priority areas as the regencies of Padangpariaman, South Solok, Solok, South Pesisir, West Pasaman, Limapuluh Kota, Sijunjung Mentawai Islands and Padang Pajang city. In January, the Global Fund donated examination equipment for HIV/AIDS patients in Jember regency, East Java. Coordinating Welfare Minister Agung Laksono in December 2012 said around 70% of the government's budget for HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention programs originate from foreign donations and grants, making the country's fight against the disease vulnerable. Laksono, who also serves as the head of the National AIDS Prevention Commission (KPAN), said the government will focus on 182 regencies for HIV/AIDS

mitigation programs and funding until 2015. He added the government has allocated Rp346 billion for HIV/AIDS mitigation in 2013.

## TUBERCULOSIS

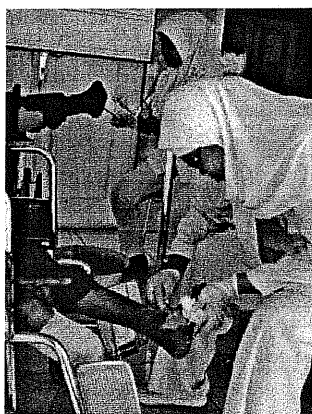
### Official: Indonesia ranks third-highest for tuberculosis:

Indonesia has the third-highest rate of tuberculosis infection in the world, after India and China, a local health official said on February 6. East Java Health Agency official Achmad Djaely said around 500,000 new cases of tuberculosis are reported each year across the country, killing around 140,000 people. Around 40,000 new cases of tuberculosis are reported in East Java alone while the provincial capital Surabaya records an average of 4,500 cases a year, he said. In May 2012, the Health Ministry said one of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that Indonesia is set to achieve is to halve the number of tuberculosis infections and fatalities by 2015. The tuberculosis rate in the country was 189 infections per 100,000 people in 2010, a 45% decrease from 343 infections per 100,000 people in 1990, according to the ministry. The mortality rate in 2010 was 27 deaths per 100,000 people, a 71% decrease from 92 per 100,000 people in 1990. Health officials in 2012 said Rp2 trillion has been allocated to combat the disease, but co-infections with other diseases and a lack of infrastructure are hampering the efforts.



**Analysis:** Tuberculosis remains a major health threat for much of the country, but infections of the disease are particularly high in East Java. An estimated 140,000 Indonesians die from tuberculosis each year with the disease the second-leading cause of death after heart disease for all ages in the country. Health experts say the main factors fueling the trend are poor environmental sanitation, prison overcrowding and a decrease in the numbers of children receiving basic and mandatory vaccinations. Due to a general lack of proper education on health issues in Indonesia, many parents are unaware or misinformed about the importance of vaccinations, while several Islamist groups have launched campaigns against vaccinations, saying they are 'haram,' or forbidden in Islam. In 2011, the Health Ministry reported several regions of having vaccination coverage for children lower than 90%. Until such time as the government spends more on improving sanitation systems and improves health education, easily preventable diseases such as tuberculosis will remain major health threats for the population, especially poorer residents.

## LEPROSY



**Ministry: Indonesia third-highest worldwide for leprosy infections:** Health Minister Nafsiah Mboi on February 13 said Indonesia is ranked as the third-highest in the world in terms of leprosy infections. The World Health Organization (WHO) in late 2012 said Indonesia had the most infections of the disease after India and Brazil. Mboi said around 23,100 leprosy cases were recorded in Indonesia at the end of 2012, an increase of 10.11% from around 20,000 cases recorded a year earlier. In October 2011, the NGO Netherlands Leprosy Relief and Rehabilitation cited similar data showing Indonesia has the third-highest rate of leprosy infections worldwide, with at least 17,900 people infected in 2010. Mboi said 50% of the leprosy infections in the country were reported in Java. In Riau, the local health agency recorded 60 cases of leprosy in Indragiri Hilir regency during 2012, an increase from 17 cases in 2011. Indragiri Hilir Health Agency head Rasul Alim said the spread of the disease is exacerbated by residents' refusal to undergo regular medical



check-ups. Mboi said the central government has several programs for helping leprosy sufferers, but many patients are ashamed to be treated because they think the illness is a curse from God. Leprosy is a chronic disease caused by the bacteria *mycobacterium leprae* and *mycobacterium lepromatosis*. If left untreated, leprosy can cause permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs and eyes. It only can be cured through a multi-drug therapy regimen lasting 12 to 18 months. The Health Ministry said 12% of all leprosy cases in Indonesia are identified too late for the treatment to be effective.

**Analysis:** Despite efforts to stamp out leprosy over the past 20 years and, bucking the global trend, Indonesia has a steadily increasing rate of the disease. A number of other countries have managed to eliminate the disease completely in the last two decades, including East Timor, which was declared leprosy-free in 2010. Leprosy is a leading cause of permanent disability and mainly affects marginalized communities. Although not fatal, the disease imposes a significant social and economic burden, with patients often shunned, isolated and displaced from their work, marriage and communities. They need chronic care and financial support, leading to further insecurity, depression and consequent economic loss. The disease is actually one of the least infectious diseases, with over 95% of the population having adequate immunity against it. Areas with the highest number of leprosy sufferers include East Java, Papua, South Sulawesi and Maluku.

## MATERNAL HEALTH

**Maternal mortality remains high in Bali:** The maternal mortality rate in Bali remains high, with 95 fatalities per 100,000 births recorded in 2012, up 12.8% from 84 deaths per 100,000 births in 2011, a health official said on February 21. The figure is still lower than the national rate of 228 fatalities per 100,000 births, Bali Health Agency head I Ketut Suarjaya said. He added that in order to curb maternal deaths the agency has improved public health centers and expanded the public health insurance program. In Central Java, the maternal mortality rate in Magelang regency decreased from 110 deaths per 100,000 births in 2011 to 65 deaths per 100,000 births in 2012, according to local officials. Magelang deputy regent Zaenal Arifin said the decrease was due to the implementation of maternal health campaigns by the Magelang Health Agency. The infant mortality rate in Magelang was recorded at 6.75 deaths per 1,000 births in 2012, down 8.5% from 7.38 deaths per 1,000 births in 2010.



**Analysis:** Despite Bali being one of the wealthiest regions of the country, it continues to face a number of health problems, all of which are preventable, including high maternal mortality rates, HIV/AIDS and rabies. These health issues are indicators of socio-economic development and indicate deficiencies in public health programs. A high maternal mortality rate reflects a country's poor nutrition and medical care and is easily avoidable through better access to proper healthcare for pregnant women. While more and more money is being pumped into Bali, much of it coming in the form of aid for health programs, progress is slow. The lack of easily accessible, proper healthcare facilities along with accurate health education is not easily remedied when there are not enough medical professionals or enough attention by local administrators to improve the situation.

## MALNUTRITION

**Minister: Indonesia may fail to reduce malnutrition by 2015:** Health Minister Nafsiah Mboi on February 25 said Indonesia may fail to reduce malnutrition among toddlers by 2015, which has been targeted in the UN's

Millennium Development Goals (MDG), due to the high number of cases in recent years. Mboi said the ministry was targeting to reduce the prevalence of malnutrition to 15%, but the figure currently stands at 17.9%. The minister acknowledged that the high prevalence of malnutrition is not only caused by poverty, but also a lack of medical care for pregnant women and proper nutrition for their children. She said to overcome the problem the government is coordinating with health professionals and NGOs. A report from the National Commission for Child Protection (Komnas PA) in December said eight million children in Indonesia were malnourished in 2012. The commission said that 900,000 of the children suffered stunted growth and impaired physical development as a result of malnutrition, while 10,000 malnourished children suffered hearing impairments.



**More than 7,000 toddlers in Banten malnourished:** At least 7,213 toddlers in Banten suffered from malnutrition last year, according to local health officials. Banten Health Agency official Andi Suhardi blamed the cases on poverty and a lack of knowledge about proper nutrition among residents. Most of the malnourished children were found in Tangerang city and in the regencies of Tangerang, Serang and Pandeglang, Suhardi said on February 25. Malnutrition was also reported in North Sumatra and North Sulawesi. In North Sumatra, at least 476 children suffered from malnutrition in 2012. In North Sulawesi, 72 cases were recorded throughout the year.

## LEPTOSPIROSIS

**C. Java: Two die from leptospirosis in Semarang:** Two people died and 11 others were infected with the rare bacterial infection leptospirosis in Semarang, Central Java since the beginning of the year, a local health official said on February 22. The fatalities occurred in Tembalang and North Semarang districts, said Semarang Health Agency head Mada G. Soebowo. He said many of the patients failed to seek medical treatment due to a lack of knowledge among the public about the infection. Leptospirosis is transmitted to humans when water that has been contaminated with animal urine comes in contact with unhealed breaks in the skin. It can be carried by a range of mammals, but is mostly spread by rats. The infection begins with flu-like symptoms, such as fever, chills, muscle pain, vomiting and intense headache. Leptospirosis infected at least 95 people in Semarang in 2012, killing 12.

## OTHERS

**More than 60,000 toddlers suffer respiratory infections in Pekanbaru:** At least 60,207 toddlers in the provincial capital of Pekanbaru, Riau contracted acute respiratory infection (ISPA) in 2012, a local health official said on March 1. The patients suffered from fever, influenza and pneumonia, the city's Health Agency head Rini Hermiyati said, adding that air pollution and weather changes were the main causes. Satellites detected 233 hotspots from forest fires, the main cause of air pollution in the region, across Sumatra in February, 136 of which were located in Riau. Authorities urged residents to wear masks during outdoor activities to minimize the risk of respiratory infections.



**Analysis:** Fires appear to have started early in Sumatra with a shorter wet season giving farmers and planters the chance to clear land before underbrush becomes too dry and fire spreads too easily. The

result however is a large amount of smoke, sending carbon and other particles into the air. The current spate of fires in southern Sumatra may suggest an early on-set of the annual haze problem, on which Indonesia continues to fail to act on land clearing by fire. In the past fires were blamed on shifting agriculture communities but that excuse has worn very thin over the years, with the clear culprits plantation companies extending their plantations. Villagers pressing up against national parks in Sumatra are a cause of deforestation and also add to the annual haze burden.

**NTB: Drink tests show cocktails are toxic:** Health authorities have confirmed a bar in North Lombok regency, West Nusa Tenggara where Perth teenager Liam Davies had the methanol-laced drink that killed him, is still selling potentially deadly drinks. The Food and Drug Monitoring Agency (BPOM) found methanol in drink samples from Rudy's Pub, the bar on the holiday island of Gili Trawangan, where Davies, 19, bought the drink on New Year's Eve. Davies was initially misdiagnosed in Indonesia as having suffered a brain aneurysm. It was discovered after he was flown back to his hometown – when he had already gone blind – that his severe illness was the result of methanol poisoning. BPOM head Sri Utami Ekaningtyas revealed the findings in Bali on February 19 and said he had informed the police. Reports said the BPOM discovered imported Mansion House vodka containing methanol during the operation, with the agency saying the drinks had no legal distribution permit. Davies' parents, Lhani and Tim, demanded police immediately close the bar. It is not clear when the tainted drinks were tested but authorities took samples from the bar in January when Davies' parents flew to Lombok to push for a belated manslaughter investigation. They were assured there would be an inquiry but the bar stayed open. In days after Davies' death on January 6, tests found traces of methanol in a vodka-based drink from Rudy's similar to the one the teenager had. Of the two samples tested in a clinical laboratory in the Bali provincial capital Denpasar, a drink meant to contain only vodka, Sprite and ice



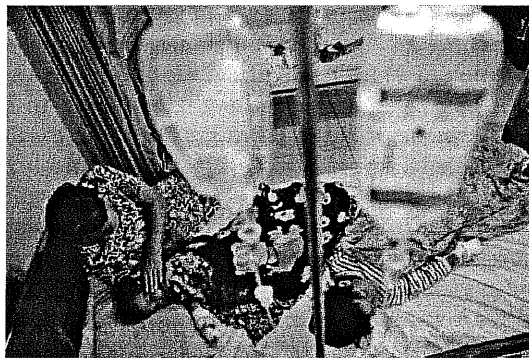
water had a methanol level of 0.02%. The North Lombok Tourism Agency has threatened to revoke the business licenses of any outlet found selling unregistered alcoholic beverages. "The policy was implemented for safety and business considerations. Businesses feel that foreign tourists will stop coming to the popular holiday area unless they clean up the alcohol industry," agency spokesman Fahman Toriki said. He added local officials have told all hotels in Gili Trawangan that they are not allowed to sell home-made alcohol. Authorities, including the local BPOM, would go to bars on the island to discourage bar owners from selling traditional spirits, often spiked with methanol, Toriki said. However, the monitoring does not address the issue of brand-name liquor adulterated with methanol, reportedly a common practice at the bars.

**Govt. on lookout for horsemeat-tainted food:** The Health Ministry on February 19 said it is investigating whether food products of Swiss-brand Nestlé in the country are tainted with horsemeat after several food products in Europe were found to contain horsemeat. "We haven't found any indication yet that products in Indonesia contain horsemeat, but I have instructed the Drug and Food Monitoring Agency (BPOM) to investigate," said Health Minister Nafsiah Mboi. Nestlé is the latest food company hit by Europe's widening horsemeat scandal, withdrawing two types of pasta meals from supermarket shelves in Italy and Spain due to contamination. German discount chain Lidl pulled ready-made meals from the shelves of its Finnish, Danish, Swedish and Belgian stores as it also confirmed the presence of horsemeat. Nestlé, the world's biggest food company, said in a statement that tests have found traces of horse DNA in two products, while assuring that there was no public health risk.

**One arrested, illegal medicine seized in N. Sumatra:** A man was arrested and illegal medicines and cosmetics worth more than Rp1 billion were confiscated in raids in Medan and Deli Serdang regency, North Sumatra. Medan Food and Drug Monitoring Agency head I Gde Nyoman Suandi on February 20 said the raids occurred at a home in Hamparan Perak district, Deli Serdang regency and a store in Medan Johor district, Medan. The agency seized over 900,000 packages comprising dozens of items such as illegal herbal drinks, painkillers and skin whitening as well as body care products. The medicines did not carry information

on licensing and dosage and contained hazardous materials, said Suandi, adding the man has been named a suspect in the case. The agency called on residents to buy medicines at pharmacies instead of ordinary stores.

**C. Java: 160 hospitalized with food poisoning in Kebumen:** At least 160 people were hospitalized with food poisoning in Karang Sambung district, Kebumen regency, Central Java on February 6. The victims, students and teachers at the Muhammadiyah Senior High School, complained of nausea and vomiting shortly after consuming catered food for lunch. The large number of victims had to be spread over three hospitals in the area as the Kebumen Public Hospital lacked adequate capacity. Most of the patients were receiving intensive treatment. Samples of the food were sent to the local health agency for laboratory tests, while a police investigation has been launched into the catering service.



**Analysis:** It is generally accepted that the most common health risks encountered in Indonesia are those that are gastric in nature and originate from contaminated water or food. Communicable diseases continue to be the major cause of morbidity and mortality, with mosquito-borne viruses such as dengue fever and malaria posing the highest risks. Food-borne illnesses are caused by a variety of pathogenic bacteria, viruses, or chemicals that contaminate food. Such contamination usually arises from improper handling, preparation or food storage. Some basic precautions can be applied to minimize the chances of food poisoning. If possible, monitor the way your food is being cooked, and use your senses of smell and sight to check the food before eating it. This is particularly relevant for food sold and prepared at traditional markets, street stalls and small restaurants, especially those offering meat and especially seafood. It is also important for companies to ensure the standards of catering services they employ for official events or for employees, as they could be held responsible for paying compensation to victims of food poisoning and at the least will need to cover any hospital costs.

**W. Java: Hundreds hospitalized with food poisoning in Sukabumi:** More than 240 people were hospitalized with food poisoning in Bantargadung district, Sukabumi regency, West Java, a local health official said on February 10. The head of disease observation and prevention at the Sukabumi Health Agency, Sri Yasti, said the victims were complaining of nausea and vomiting several hours after consuming food at a wedding party in the district. Most of the victims were taken to local public health centers, while others were rushed to a public hospital to receive intensive care, as they suffered a rapid loss of body fluids, Yasti said, adding the number of victim might increase. Samples of the food have been sent to the local health agency for laboratory tests, while police are investigating the catering service.

**C. Kalimantan: Dozens hospitalized with food poisoning in Kapuas:** Forty-eight people were hospitalized with apparent food poisoning in Murung sub-district, Selat district, Kapuas regency, Central Kalimantan, a health official said on February 4. Local hospital director Bawa Budi said 22 of the victims were still receiving intensive treatment for nausea and vomiting. The victims were taken to the hospital after consuming food served at a wedding party in the village, he added. Budi said a food sample has been taken for laboratory tests.