

**Press Information Bureau  
Government of India  
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**

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**President launches the National Immunization Day, 2013 on the day India completes two years without a single case of polio**

President of India launched the National Immunization Day, 2013 by administering polio drops to children at Rashtrapati Bhavan today.

Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad, Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare, Shri S. Gandhi Selvan, Minister of State for Health & Family Welfare, Dr. A K Walia, Health Minister, Govt. of NCT of Delhi, representatives from WHO, UNICEF, USAIDS & Rotary India, officers of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India and other partners were present on the occasion.

Speaking on the historic occasion, Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad said,

“I am extremely happy to inform this august gathering that today is a momentous day for the whole country, as India has completed two years without any case of wild polio virus.

On 25th February 2012, the World Health Organization removed India from the list of polio endemic countries, which was a historical achievement since there was a perception among many experts that India would be the last country to eradicate polio.

This was more so because, until 2009, India accounted for half of the total polio cases in the world.

You would appreciate that overcoming the burden of polio cases was a huge challenge to which the Government of India responded with a strong political will by providing financial resources, vastly improved coverage, quick response times and adoption of technological innovations, including a Bivalent oral polio vaccine, which India was among the first to introduce from January, 2010.

Here, I would like to emphasize, that polio eradication effort will continue to be one of the thrust areas of the Government.

To mitigate the risk, we need to continue to protect every child up to the age of 5 years with the polio vaccine, till polio is eradicated globally.

Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria still continue to be polio endemic countries in the world.

I would like to mention here that to deal with any case of polio importation, we have put in place an Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan which we are committed to implement in all

States across the country.

Under this plan, a case of poliovirus anywhere in the country will be treated as a public health emergency.

Rapid Response Teams have been formed in all the States and Union Territories, to effectively respond to any case of polio importation.

The focus of the Ministry and the partners continues to be on the most vulnerable migrant, mobile populations, youngest children and under-served populations, which remain at the highest risk of contracting the disease.

I am happy to inform you that the Nation-wide Immunization campaign for Polio Eradication will start on 20st January 2013, in which more than 170 million children of less than 5 years of age will be given polio drops.

More than 23 lakh volunteers will participate in this massive national effort, with more than 1.5 lakh supervisors monitoring the quality and coverage of the Immunization activity.

A campaign of such scale and size is unique in the world.

The launch of this mammoth campaign by you will send a strong message of appreciation, to everyone associated with this programme and will be a great source of inspiration throughout the year.

We are confident, that under your leadership and guidance, India will continue to make further progress in the fight against polio, so that the country and the South East Asia Region are declared Polio free in 2014.

We are grateful to you, Hon'ble President, for sparing some of your valuable time to launch the National Immunization Day, 2013.

On my behalf and on behalf of my ministry I thank you once again,

**JAI HIND!"**

**SC/BN/HB**