

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

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**Close Monitoring of India's Polio-Free Status Continues
Polio not the only cause for AFP**

Surveillance for poliovirus through National Polio Surveillance Project (NPSP), a collaborative of World Health Organization and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India is one of the major pillars of the polio eradication strategy.

India has a highly sensitive surveillance system that is capable of rapidly picking up cases of polio anywhere in the country. The steps taken by the Government to monitor polio free status are :

(i) Sensitive Surveillance to detect polio cases. For instance, more than 35,000 reporting sites reported more than 60,000 cases of Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) for polio surveillance in 2011 alone that were subsequently investigated. The surveillance activities are coordinated by nearly 300 medical officers of WHO-NPSP.

(ii) Environmental Surveillance of sewage samples are being tested for detection of the polio virus at Mumbai, Delhi, Patna and Kolkata.

(iii) Surveillance reviews by national and international public health experts are carried out at regular interval.

(iv) Monitoring of polio campaigns by independent monitors to identify the gaps and provide suggestions for corrective actions.

(b): Five booths have been setup along the Indo-Pak border for continuous vaccination of children upto 5 years of age that are crossing border to check the importation of polio-virus into the country.

As part of surveillance, any child less than 15 years of age who suddenly develops floppiness or weakness or paralysis in any part of the body is investigated thoroughly. These cases are called Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) cases. Stool samples are collected from all AFP cases and tested to rule out polio as a cause of the illness. It is important to understand that polio is one of the several causes of AFP and not the only cause for AFP. It is incorrect to call an AFP case a polio case until confirmed by laboratory test.

The case reported in a news item in a section of media today, is one of the many AFP cases detected this year that are currently under investigation. The case was notified to the programme yesterday and stool samples of this case are being collected and sent to the laboratory for testing. The results of the stool specimen testing are likely to be received by end

March. It is only after test results are received from the laboratory that the programme will know whether this is a case of polio or not.

An update of the Acute Flaccid Paralysis (AFP) cases under investigation and the laboratory results is available on the website of the National Polio Surveillance Project. The information is updated every week and can be accessed at www.npsindia.org. In 2012 so far, over 8,000 AFP cases have been investigated by NPSP with the support of local health authorities. All the stool samples of these AFP cases have tested negative for polio.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, is continuing its efforts at ensuring community awareness and support to polio eradication programme and motivation of the polio workforce. Though India has achieved a major milestone of not reporting any case of polio for more than a year and as a result India has been struck off WHO's polio endemic list, the job is not done yet.

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