



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

---

16-January-2016 17:08 IST

**President launches countrywide Pulse Polio Programme for 2016**

**Shri J P Nadda: “Polio-free status for five years is a treasure for all of us”**

The President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee launched the Pulse Polio programme for 2016 by administering polio drops to children less than five years old, at the Rahstrapati Bhawan, in the presence of the Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare Shri J P Nadda, here today. Tomorrow is the National Immunization Day. Around 17.4 crore children of less than five years across the country will be given polio drops as part of the drive of Government of India to sustain polio eradication from the country.

Speaking at the function on the eve of the National Immunization Day, the Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare Shri J P Nadda said “Polio-free status for five years is a treasure for all of us”. He also said: “India has been now validated for Maternal and Neonatal Tetanus elimination in May 2015, well before the global target date of December 2015. This is a monumental achievement in the country’s efforts to achieve universal health care and address health inequities”.

The Health Minister pointed out that it is not the end but a new beginning to sustain what the country has achieved with tremendous hard work and patience. As polio is now endemic in only two countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan, the world is at last stage of polio eradication, he added. In order to mitigate the risk of importation, the immunity against polio infection is maintained through National and Sub National Polio rounds along with sustained high quality polio surveillance, he added. “We are vigilant and that is the reason we are conducting continuous polio vaccination at the international borders with India. A travel advisory has also been issued as per WHO guidelines to vaccinate all travellers who are travelling between India and eight other countries namely Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Cameroon, Syria, Ethiopia, Somalia & Kenya. Also, an Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) is in place under which Rapid Response Teams (RRT) have been formed in all States/UTs to respond urgently to any importations of poliovirus”, Shri Nadda stated.

The Health Minister mentioned that in a landmark step to provide double protection to our children and securing our gains of polio eradication, Government of India has introduced the injectable Inactivated Polio Vaccine (IPV) into its routine

immunization program along with oral polio vaccine from 30 November 2015. In the first phase IPV has been introduced in six States, viz Assam, Gujarat, Punjab, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh. He added that “We are also planning for switch from trivalent OPV to bivalent OPV in some months in a globally synchronized manner”.

The Union Health Minister applauded the efforts of the thousands of volunteers, frontline workers, health officials across the states and development partners for their tireless efforts in keeping the country polio-free.

Also present at the function were Shri B P Sharma, Secretary (HFW), senior officers of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and representatives of development partners.

\*\*\*\*

MV