

**Press Information Bureau
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President Launches the 2012 Pulse Polio Campaign

Zero Tolerance for Any New Polio Case: Azad

The President of India Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil today administered Polio vaccine drops to eight children at Rashtrapati Bhawan. The President was launching the National Pulse Polio Programme for 2012 today.

Speaking on the occasion, the Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Sh. Ghulam Nabi Azad said that India is making history in its fight against polio. "It is indeed a remarkable achievement that for the last one year, the country has remained completely free from Polio without witnessing even a single case. In the past, India had a rather large share of global polio cases and only two years ago in 2009, we accounted for half of the total polio cases in the world. Seen against this back drop, today's achievement of one full year of zero polio case is extremely impressive" he highlighted.

Shri Azad informed that Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has taken major steps to reach virtually every child in the country, even in the remotest and hardest to reach areas and making sure, that mobile and migratory populations are also not left uncovered. The coverage of children even in the most endemic states such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh has crossed 99%. This level of coverage is unprecedented, not witnessed anywhere in the world, the Minister added. He hoped that we carry on with our efforts with the same degree of vigour for atleast the next two years, so that India can be declared as a Polio free country in January, 2014.

Shri Azad said despite our present success, we are highly mindful of the risks that persist not only on account of indigenous transmission but also importations from other endemic countries. "We have therefore put in place an Emergency preparedness and response plan, which we are committed to implementing in all States across the country. Under this plan, there is going to be zero tolerance for any new polio case and any such case will be declared as a public health emergency" he stated. Rapid response teams have already been formed in all States and UTs to rapidly respond to any polio case in the country. In addition, all the States bordering the neighboring countries have been alerted to strengthen surveillance for early detection of any imported polio case. Special booths have been established in the bordering areas like Wagah border and Attari train station in Punjab and Munabo train station in Barmer district of Rajasthan, to ensure, that all children under five years of age coming from across the border are given polio drops.

The Nationwide Immunization campaign for Polio will start tomorrow in which more than 17 crore 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 and more than 1.5 lakh supervisors will monitor quality and coverage of the Immunization activity. Nowhere in the world, the campaign of such scale and size is undertaken in a single round.

The Minister of State Sh. S. Gandhiselvan, Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Shri P.K. Pradhan and other senior officers of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and stakeholders from development agencies were present on the occasion today.

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