

Fighting Back

Uttar Pradesh was once the epi-centre of polio. Today Uttar Pradesh is leading the battle against the polio-virus in our country. The State is yet to witness a case within its boundary for more than a year now. The last incidence of polio in U.P. was in April 2010.

The resurgence of U.P. back on the polio-free map is a success story worth telling and celebrating. I visited Bareilly and Lucknow for three days recently. My first stop was Lucknow where I participated in a meeting organised by the Ulema Committee Members. The meeting was very successful and 30 senior Ulemas attended the meet in which the State Health Minister Mr. Nasimuddin Siddiqui was present.

At the meeting all the Ulemas were unanimous in their support to the polio eradication effort and were grateful to Rotary for making them the anti-polio advocates that helped them reach out to their community. They also reaffirmed their commitment to building a polio-free Uttar Pradesh and a polio-free India. Assuring every possible support to Rotary in this endeavor, they suggested hosting of health camps inside Dargahs (place of worship), where devotees from all over the world visit in huge numbers. These Dargahs will be the site for medical services and polio immunisation booth will function from the premises.

Addressing the gathering, the State Health Minister suggested that Rotary could organise immunisation booths and camps during Kumbh Mela which is a religious gathering along the banks of convergence of three holy rivers. Stressing on the important role played by Rotary in the implementation of the polio eradication campaign, the Minister asked Rotarians to look into the issue of refusal by population in urban cities like Agra, Varanasi and Kanpur, where



Meeting with Ulemas, Lucknow.

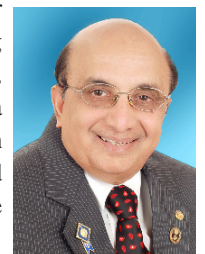
according to him, many children are left without drops due to their parent's ignorance. He assured his support and the commitment of the State Government in eradicating polio completely and keeping Uttar Pradesh polio-free.

After this encouraging meeting in Lucknow, I had the opportunity to visit Bareilly, for a meeting with the Ulema members of the western U.P. branch. About 20 senior Ulemas from the region attended the meeting that discussed amongst many others the importance of eradicating polio from the community and the indispensable role religious leaders could play in achieving the same. One encouraging revelation that came to my notice was the commitment of the members as one of the Ulema members had the anti-polio message 'Do Boond Zindagiki - Har Baccha Har Bar' (Two Drops of Life- Every Child, Every Time) printed on his visiting card. It dawned to me that with such dedication from Ulemas, Rotarians and Government in the battle against polio, the poli-virus will be left with no place to hide in U.P.

The District polio Orientation and Planning Meet that I attended in Bareilly was very well organised. The Rotary Clubs in the District have been very forthcoming in the past year with their contribution to the Foundation

towards the USD 200 million challenge grant. Seeing this encouraging response, I am sure more clubs will join the fray before the end of the year in supporting The Rotary Foundation through their contributions.

I returned to Mumbai with a very confident feeling that Rotarians, Partners and the Government of U.P. are all committed to ending polio in the State and will leave no stone unturned in their path to achieve eradication in the coming months. I was pleased to see the media reception to our meetings on polio. Both the print and electronic media covered Rotary's engagements in the two cities with very encouraging and confident words about Rotary's resolve to end polio. With Uttar Pradesh fighting back to end polio, we can say that India is surely on the path of being declared 'polio-free' in the months ahead.



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