



Reinforcing Polio Eradication Drive

The month of August is auspicious to India. Having won freedom after decades of struggle we safeguard our independence by rejoicing during the week preceding August 15th. Subsequently we work hard to ensure that the fruits of this independence are made available for generations to come. It is said that the month of August is named after Augustus who defeated Mark Antony and Cleopatra and annexed Egypt. Defeat of polio virus in India looks certain and probably a sense of relief is visible in the face of every Rotarian.

As I said, this August in 2011, we were nearly rejoicing our victory over polio. With just one case reported from January 2011, Rotarians have come close to the victory post. But this final leg requires more motivation and more resources. It is always so in a marathon or any such event where the athlete has to strain every muscle to make it to the victory stands.

My visit to New Delhi, Agra and Kanpur to attend various events connected with polio eradication drive was to interact with the Rotarians and personally motivate them to reach their goal of polio eradication. It was an enriching and emotional experience for me too. I was overwhelmed to see the dedication with which every club was responding to Rotary's call to eradicate polio during 2011. The meeting in New Delhi had over 250 participants. District Governor Asit Mittal had mobilised all the stakeholders to attend the meet. INPPC Chairman PDG Deepak Kapur, PDG Manjit Shawney, NCM Raman Bhatia and DPPC Ashok Aggarwal put up an impressive programme where the representatives from NPSP-WHO and Delhi Government gave positive suggestions and feedback to Rotary.



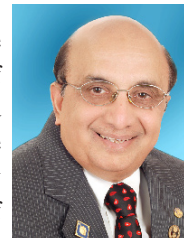
My next stop was in the historic city of Agra which had witnessed the rise and fall of the Mogul Empire. My visit there now was to witness the fall and elimination of the polio virus that seemed to rule the area with impunity. The decline of polio was heartening but the decline in the number of participants which was just about 50, was not. The leaders were there but not the soldiers! But leaders such as NCM Shivraj Bhargava know that the Rotarians will not fail to respond to any emergency. My fear is that there should be no emergency situation that requires an immediate mobilisation of volunteers to tackle the crisis. However, with the NCM reassuring me that strict vigil is being maintained and no polio virus can sneak into this area, I felt that Rotarians have not lowered their guard.

Kanpur was my next destination. I can claim that I was received with a thunderous applause on arrival! It was thunder and rain all day. The city nearly got submerged. But Rotarians here did not. The city's suburbs are believed to be the place where the epic Ramayana was

written. Rotarians here will now write the epitaph on the tombs of the polio virus. That they are determined to write a page in the history of polio eradication was seen when over 300 participants braved the weather and attended the polio eradication meet.

I must particularly compliment the 50 Ulemas who had gathered in Kanpur to pledge their support for the polio eradication efforts of Rotary. Every time I am with the volunteers who fight polio and go from house to house to save every child, I feel more humbled.

I am able to feel the vigour in the talk of every Rotarian and as a result I am able to rededicate my efforts to rid India of polio.



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