

# Moradabad Revisited

When a resident of Moradabad managed to sneak into an aircraft in the Middle East and landed in India as a stowaway, people were not sure whether to treat the news as interesting or alarming! In a purely lighter vein, Moradabad has probably earned the distinction of hiding the polio virus in small pockets that are not visited by the Rotarians or health workers. This city still poses a challenge for the polio eradication programme. RIPN Kalyan Banerjee and I decided to visit the place before the NID in January 2010 to see how the efforts can be strengthened. It is the wish of RIPN Kalyan Banerjee that polio is eradicated from India before he takes over as the President of RI in 2011. Being a person committed to the cause of polio eradication, he decided that the best way to spend the New Year eve and the dawn of 2010 was in the polio endemic areas of Uttar Pradesh. Both of us decided that the New Year's resolution will be to activate the clubs in the district 3110 and be with them on January 1, 2010 to take the solemn pledge to fight the virus to the finish.

Moradabad is one of the most important commercial towns not only in Uttar Pradesh but also in the whole of North India. In fact, Moradabad is the largest producer of copper and its alloys in Asia and is counted among the top five copper-stuff exporting centres in the world. The city is famous for its subtle copper and bronze works that are exported to hundreds of countries throughout the world. This is why Moradabad is also known as 'Peetal Nagari'

or copper town. This famous place was fast becoming a 'Polio Nagari' and before this could happen the battle against polio had to be fought there at its doorsteps. Moradabad has the credit for giving the final shape to Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement. I am afraid that the tendency is reflected for the wrong reasons now and efforts to have a joint action plan for eradicating polio must gather momentum.

District Governor of 3100 Sangeetha Kumar, NCM Sudhir Gupta, DPPC B S Mathur and DGN Neeraj Agarwal accompanied us to Hamirpur, Guladiyamafi and Taarabad met the victims of recent polio attacks. The visit was followed up with a meeting with District Collector of Moradabad Mr. Ravindra IAS and Divisional Commissioner Mr. Manoj Kumar Singh IAS and newer strategies were discussed. The visit to Sirsi, Hazrat Nagar Garhi and Hathiya Khera proved useful to take stock of the activities that were going on for routine immunisation. I must make a special mention about

the efforts of NCM Sudhir Gupta who seems to be fighting a battle against polio single handedly here.

It was noticed that the routine immunisation programme was deficient in certain areas and the markings on the houses revealed that the children had not been immunised. Deplorable sanitary conditions were noticed in most areas and extremely unhygienic drinking water was what people were consuming. This is an area where the clubs can concentrate their efforts and bring about a visible change.

The Block Mobilisation Co-ordinators and Community Mobilisation Co-ordinators of UNICEF were visiting the villagers. To raise the level of routine immunisation to 100 percent Auxiliary Nursing Midwives were motivated to visit every house. The number of midwives needed to be increased and given proper transport facility. The virus is also carried in adults and when these people defecate in the open, the contamination reaches the children. It was suggested that in High risk areas, the vaccine can be given to all persons. It is important that the DG and all

the clubs in this district devote more time in the coming days to ensure that no child goes without being immunised.

The banners and pamphlets advocating immunisation needed to be more attractive and also large quantities needed to be made. The polio immunisation programme needed to be supported with the Zinc & ORS promotion also and the assistance of medical practitioners was needed. The quality of water from hand pumps needed monitoring. Rotarians and the

community members must take up the programme seriously if the virus must go from this place.

The glory of Moradabad must be restored. From 1625 when the city was founded, it has seen many wars, though between its own people. Today the war we must wage is against the polio virus, which like a stowaway, seems to be hatching on to different children and creating havoc. The Gangetic plain in which this area falls is a fertile place for grains, cotton and sugarcane. It should not become a fertile place for the polio virus.



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*RIPN Kalyan Banerjee discussing the Polio Immunisation Strategy.*