

India keeps polio at bay for 11 months

Just 1 Case In 2011, Mumbai Virus-Free For Over 3 Yrs

Sumitra Deb Roy | TNN

Mumbai: After concerted efforts of nearly two decades, eradication measures finally seems to have gained an upper hand over the wild poliomyelitis virus. This year just one case was reported from across India and, more importantly, zero cases were reported in the last 11 months.

Mumbai, on its part, has achieved polio-free status ever since the last case of P3 strain was detected in February 2008 and that of P1 in November 2006.

Even the sewage samples have not shown any traces of the virus for the last few years now. However, the city continues to be one of the high-risk districts in the state due to high migration.

At the state level too, it has been more than a year since the last case was detected in Beed in September 2010.

State immunization officer Dr V N Kulkarni said that though it was one of the most exciting phases in the histo-



NUMBERS SPEAK

Year	Cases
1998	1,934
2002	1,600
2004	134
2005	66
2007	874
2009	741
2010	42
2011	01

(till Dec 15)

ry of the battle against polio, it may be a little early to rejoice.

"We have to be vigilant as chances of importation of the virus from other coun-

tries is always there," he said.

As for eradication, India will have to ensure that no polio case is detected for three consecutive years.

Regional team leader, WHO Dr Ravindra Banpel said that the most difficult phase has actually begun and adequate surveillance has to be maintained.

Banpel also added that introduction of the bivalent vaccine—that targets the P1 and P3 strains in high-risk areas, contributed majorly to bringing down the cases.

India has already eradicated the third strain, P3, in 1999. On Thursday, the Unicef launched its new communication campaign for polio, urging parents to take advantage of this unique opportunity to make 'polio history in India'.

Goodwill ambassador for polio eradication actor Amitabh Bachchan said that the new member in his family, Abhishek and Aishwarya's daughter, would also be given "two drops of life".