

WHO lauds India's anti-polio drive

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New Delhi: India's success in controlling polio — not reporting a single case of the crippling disease in 12 months — has been lauded by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Calling it "India's greatest public health achievement", the WHO said the number of polio-endemic countries — those which have never stopped indigenous wild polio virus transmission — could soon be reduced to a historical low of three: Afghanistan, Nigeria and Pakistan.

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WHO has dubbed India's zero-polio record in 12 months the country's greatest public health achievement. The nation was once known as the polio epicentre

nized as the world's epicentre of polio. If all pending laboratory investigations return negative, in the coming weeks, India will officially be deemed to have stopped indigenous transmission of wild polio virus. India's success is arguably its greatest public health achievement and has provided a global op-

portunity to push for the end of polio," said WHO director-general Margaret Chan.

She said the Global Polio Eradication Initiative is in full emergency mode. "Stopping polio in India required creativity, perseverance and professionalism. The lessons from India must now be adopted and implemented

through emergency actions to finish polio everywhere," Chan added.

TOI on Friday had reported how countries like Angola, Lebanon, Tajikistan, Bangladesh and Namibia are fighting polio with most of them having imported the virus from India multiple times in the past decade. The WHO said, "The polio virus can travel easily to polio-free areas." Director of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Dr Thomas Frieden said India must continue to protect its children through supplementary immunization activities. India saw a 94% decline in polio cases in 2010. It recorded only 42 polio cases.