

Countries preparing for Polio End Game Strategy: WHO

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WHO congratulated Member States for keeping polio at bay, despite the continued threat of poliovirus importation from polio-infected countries outside of the region.

On May 5, 2014, the region was declared a global public health emergency of international concern by the director-general, WHO following its spread beyond the endemic Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Pakistan as these infected countries continue to pose a risk to the polio-free status of WHO South-East Asia region.

Countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar and Nepal in the region are taking additional measures such as cross-border vaccination, while India has made polio vaccination, mandatory for travellers to and from the infected countries.

Nepal and Maldives have introduced inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) in their immunization schedule and other countries are expected to follow suit.

"Countries of the region are preparing for the Polio End Game Strategy, to introduce a dose of injectable IPV in childhood immunization schedules ahead of the proposed globally synchronized, phased and sequential withdrawal of oral polio vaccines," said Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, regional director, WHO Southeast Asia.