

## Epidemiological Unit

### Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition

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### **OPV Immunization for Pilgrims to India**

### **National Poliomyelitis Eradication Initiative**

While our country still remains polio free since 1993, several neighbouring countries have reported recently a few sporadic cases of poliomyelitis. One of the worst affected is our closest neighbour India, which is the most travelled to by thousands of Buddhist devotees from our country on usually long drawn pilgrimages. One of the pilgrim sites Bodhgaya in Bihar state had recently reported a few polio cases and there is a risk though very remote of importing the disease through pilgrims to these areas.

Considering the gravity of the situation, Ministry of Health has decided to recommend that **all pilgrims proceeding to India on pilgrimage** be immunized with one dose of OPV prior to their departure (ideally two weeks before) regardless of their age. This decision has been supported by the National Committee for Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication (NCCPE). Once the pilgrims return to the country it is requested that they report to the nearest Medical Officers of Health (MOH) and the MOOH have been instructed to follow them up.

### **Guidelines on Immunization of pilgrims were sent to -**

1. Provincial Directors of Health Service
2. Regional Directors of Health Service
3. Regional Epidemiologists
4. Medical Officers of Health
5. Airport Health Office
6. Port Health Office