

# The Nation

## Joint efforts sought to improve child immunisation

World immunisation week kicks off

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Islamabad - As part of the World Immunisation Week being celebrated across the globe including Pakistan from 24th to 30th April, a special briefing was organised jointly by Polio Eradication Programme (PEP) and Pakistan Paediatric Association (PPA) at the Prime Minister's office here on Friday.

The briefing was presided over by Prime Minister's Focal Person on Polio Eradication Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq. A high-level delegation of PPA led by Dr Tahir Masood and representatives of international partner agencies, including World Health Organisation and UNICEF, participated in the event.

Prime Minister's Focal Person for Polio Eradication, Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq has called upon leading Pakistani paediatricians to play a key role in the country's efforts and goal to eradicate polio once and for all. She said the role of child specialists in promoting children's health is of critical importance and there was a need for the government and PPA to work in close collaboration to achieve the common goal of protecting and preserving the health of children.

"Pakistan's paediatricians and medical professionals are our crucial partners and are highly valued and trusted in our communities.

Their role in raising the awareness of parents and communities to the importance of the polio vaccine and addressing any concerns about the safety of vaccines is key to achieving the goal of a polio-free Pakistan and healthy children for years and years to come," said Ayesha.

She stressed on collaboration with all segments of society to promote the cause of enhancing immunisation coverage of children in the country.

Underscoring the importance of civil society engagement, Ayesha said that it is a shared responsibility where people of all shades and professions have to change the perception of public and invoke health seeking behaviours among masses.

She while appreciating the frontline workers said that vaccinators and social mobilisers are the critical actors and heroes of the polio eradication program as they stand closest to families and children we are trying to reach.

Through community meetings, engagement with religious and community leaders, research and mass media, the program will strive to create an enabling environment that will facilitate access of vaccinators to children in each and every household.

The PPA is a national representation association of paediatricians.

Since its creation in 1965, PPA has been active in improving the health and well being of all children in Pakistan, said President of PPA, Dr Tahir Masood.

He underlined PPA's commitment to uphold the ongoing eradication effort in Pakistan towards the finish line.

The PPA agreed to work in close collaboration with Pakistan Polio Eradication Program to raise awareness in their area of influence regarding the importance of children receiving Polio vaccine each time it is offered as part of mass immunisation drives and routine vaccine against nine preventable diseases.

The PPA also pledged to hold special joint activities with the Polio Eradication Program to take the cause forward.