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Our correspondent
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From Print Edition

Islamabad

The PM's focal person on polio eradication Ayesha Raza Farooq Friday called upon leading Pakistani paediatricians to play a role in the country's efforts to eradicate polio once and for all.

"The role of child specialists in promoting children's health is of critical importance, and there is a need for the government and the Pakistan Paediatric Association (PPA) to work in close collaboration to achieve the common goal of protecting the health of children," Ayesha stated at a briefing organised as part of the World Immunisation week being celebrated across the globe including Pakistan from April 24-30.

A joint initiative of the Polio Eradication Programme and PPA, the briefing was held at the Prime Minister's office, with a PPA delegation led by Dr. Tahir Masood in attendance. Representatives of international partner agencies including the World Health Organisation and Unicef also participated in the event.

Ayesha termed Pakistan's paediatricians and medical professionals are crucial partners who are valued and trusted by communities. "Your role in raising awareness about 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," said Ayesha.

The focal person underlined the need for collaboration with all segments of the society to promote the cause of enhancing immunisation coverage. Underscoring the importance of civil society engagement, Ayesha said 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.

While appreciating the role of frontline workers, Ayesha said, "Our vaccinators and social mobilisers are the heroes of the polio eradication programme 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 programme will strive to create an enabling environment that will facilitate access of vaccinators to children in each and every household."

Earlier, Dr. Tahir Masood highlighted PPA's role in improving the health of children ever since its creation in 1965. He pledged PPA's commitment to upholding the ongoing eradication effort in Pakistan towards the finish line.

PPA agreed to work in close collaboration with polio eradication programme 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 immunization drives and routine vaccine against nine preventable diseases. PPA also pledged to hold special joint activities with the polio eradication programme to take the cause forward.