India marks 1 year since last polio case

January 13 2012

A young Indian girl is given her first polio vaccination at a health camp organized by the Rotary Club in conjunction with UNICEF and the WHO, in Moradabad, in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, Thursday, Jan. 12, 2012. India will celebrate a full year since its last reported case of polio on Friday, a major victory in a global eradication effort that appeared to be stalled just a few years ago. If no previously undisclosed cases of the crippling disease are discovered across the country, India will no longer be considered to be polio endemic, leaving only Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria on that list. (AP Photo/Kevin Frayer)

(AP) -- The top U.S. health official administered polio vaccination drops to children in New Delhi on Friday as India marked one year since its

last case of the crippling disease.

The milestone is a major victory in the global effort to eradicate polio. If no previously undisclosed cases are uncovered in the coming weeks, India will be removed the list of endemic countries, leaving only Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nigeria.

U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius marked the day by administering the oral polio vaccine to children at a maternal health clinic in New Delhi.

India's success in fighting polio has been credited to a partnership between the government, the World Health Organization, UNICEF and Rotary International, whose members have contributed more than $1 billion to the global eradication effort.

The achievement gives a boost to those who had begun to lose hope of ever defeating the stubborn disease.

"Marching ahead, the goal now is to sustain this momentum," said Deepak Kapur, head of Rotary's polio eradication program in India.