

# India's last reported polio victim 'leads normal life'

January 13 2014, by Sailendra Sil

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When her friends, brother and sisters run around playing in their village in eastern India, four-year-old Rukshar Khatoon simply watches.

Although Rukshar can walk, the pain in her right leg from the polio she contracted as a toddler is too much to bear.

"She can now stand on her feet and walk, but can't run," her father, Abdul Saha, said from their home in dirt-poor Shapara village, about 30 kilometres (19 miles) from the city of Kolkata.

"When her friends play, she remains a spectator," he told AFP.

"Rukshar often feels pain in right leg (even) after a walk," her mother Sabeda Bibi Saha added.

Although Rukshar's story is tragic, doctors and [health workers](#) are confident that her case is cause for hope. Rukshar is the last known person in India to have contracted the crippling virus.

India on Monday marks the third anniversary of the day Rukshar was diagnosed on January 13, 2011, meaning India will soon be certified as having defeated the disease, in a huge advance for global eradication efforts.

For Rukshar, life has steadily improved since she was diagnosed when she was 18-months old. Doctors and her family say her leg is getting

stronger thanks to treatment and she also goes to school.

"She is now going to school and leading a normal life," said Nilanjan Mondal, a medical officer from the local health centre.

"We are closely monitoring her condition," Mondal added.

But her father is filled with guilt for failing to get her vaccinated when he had the chance. Rukshar was ill with an unrelated ailment when she was due to be vaccinated and missed it.

Her parents ensured their son was immunised but did not follow up with their two daughters.

"It was a grave mistake," Saha said as he sewed sequins onto cloth at their two-room home as part of his job.

"I took my fourth child, now one and a-half-years-old, for the pulse polio programme without any delay," he added.

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