

ICT usage for a social cause

- Realized through Video-conferencing facility of NIC

Video-conferencing service of National Informatics Centre became an instrument for partnering Bihar Government and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to tackle health concerns in Bihar. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar talked to Bill Gates via video conferencing from NIC CS Cell (extended facility).



Bill Gates
through Video-Conferencing: Taj Palace, New Delhi



Sri Nitish Kumar with Senior Bihar Govt. Officers
at NIC CS Cell (Extended facility)



Chief Minister discussing the Video-Conferencing Technology with NIC Officer Sri A.K.Panda



NIC coordinating officers of NIC CS Cell:
Sri S.K.Srivastava, Sri Ranjan Kumar Singh

The video-conferencing facility was extended by NIC. Thorough testing was carried out under the supervision of Development Commissioner Sri Anup Mukherjee, IAS and Sri Santosh Kumar, Senior Technical Director & SIO.

The technical expert guidance from NIC (HQ) was extended by Sri B.K.Sharma and the NIC Team.

All efforts were put into place to make the event a grand success. At the end, Development commissioner acknowledged the un-tiring effort of NIC officers before Chief Minister. It inspired Hon'ble Chief Minister to enquire the logistics and technology involved for the event.

TECH TOUR

Gates accepts Nitish's invite to visit Bihar

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PATNA: There is good news for Bihar. Microsoft founder Bill Gates has evinced interest to partner with Bihar to tackle major health concerns, including polio and visceral leishmaniasis (kala-azar). Gates said a taskforce, led by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's country head Ashok Alexander, would soon visit Patna to discuss key health areas for long-term support.

Bill Gates also accepted Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's invi-

tation to come to Bihar. Gates, however, said his visit would not be possible soon due to his busy schedule. "But he has accepted the invitation. He will plan his visit," the Chief Minister said.

In about half-an-hour interaction through video conferencing, Gates and Kumar discussed the areas in which the foundation could intervene to address some of the major health concerns. "The polio eradication effort is at a critical juncture, as cases in India are largely restricted to a



Chief Minister Nitish Kumar talking to Bill Gates via video conferencing on Friday.

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Gates accepts...

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geographic area in western UP and northern Bihar," Gates said. Bihar, he said, had been selected because of the magnitude of the problems and the demonstrated resolve of the State Government led by Kumar to tackle these critical health concerns. The Chief Minister apprised him of recurrence of 13 polio (B1) cases in the State, eight of which have been reported from the flood-hit Kosi region, and reiterated government's resolve to pre and post-monsoon drives.

"Why is it that despite eight drives of pulse polio campaign, B1 cases have resurfaced? In one case, B1 was reported even after 30 rounds," the Chief Minister said, wondering if it could be due to some handicaps on part of the health workers in maintaining the prescribed conditions for medicine. Gates was also aware of it.

"We cannot let the polio eradication effort to stall because it is difficult to pick up again. We are ready to work with your government and all partners in the polio effort to stop transmission in Bihar and ultimately assure all parents, that their children are safe from this crippling disease," Gates said, adding he had new appreciation of how challenging it was to vaccinate every child in the Kosi region.

Gates, who is known as much for the phenomenal success story of Microsoft as for his string of philanthropic initiatives, commended Kumar for the initiatives taken in the field of healthcare, especially child immunization. Kumar, on his part, said how the immunization level had gone up in the State from a meager 11 per cent in 1998-99 to 51 per cent in 2008, while Vitamin A coverage had jumped from 8.9 per cent in 2002 to 71 per cent in 2008. "But we have to take it further," he added.

The Chief Minister also highlighted improved access to primary rural hospitals and new initiatives like Muskaan and Mamta. "In 2005, barely 40 patients accessed hospitals per month in rural areas. Now, the number has gone up to 3000 in 2009. Kumar said further improvement was needed to ensure healthcare to all. "The partnership with the Gates Foundation would certainly add pace to healthcare programmes, which would ensure better quality of life to people," he added.

During the interaction, the Chief Minister said he also dwelt on governance and the social change that the State was ushering in. "I told him about the growing empowerment of women and the poorest of the poor," he said, adding he was looking forward to working with the Gates Foundation.

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