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Bill Gates visits Krushi Bhawan

Bhubaneswar, 28/02/2024:

Mr Bill Gates, the founder & Co-chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates' Foundation today visited Krushi Bhawan- the headquarters of the Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment, Government of Odisha. The delegations included Mr Alkesh Wadhvani, Director, Poverty Alleviation, India, BMGF, Mr Roger, President, Global Growth & Opportunities, BMGF, Mr. Hari Menon, Director, South & Southeast Asia Country, BMGF.

The Government of Odisha has been partnering with the Foundation since 2017 to forward shared goals around improving farmers' income, nutrition security, and climate resilience in the state. This partnership has allowed the state to emerge as a leader in Digital Public Infrastructure, with the Government launching key farmer-facing systems including the Krushak Odisha database, GO-SUGAM portal, and Ama Krushi extension system. With strategic support from the Foundation, the government has also been able to complete successful pilots surrounding crop diversification through the Maize Mandi and APC projects. These initiatives have now been scaled up across the state.

The delegation from the foundation, led by Mr Bill Gates was welcomed by Dr. Arabinda Kumar Padhee, Principal Secretary, Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Empowerment, Sri Suresh Kumar Vashishth, Principal Secretary, Fisheries & Animal Resource Development Department, and Sri Prem Chandra Chaudhary, Director, Agriculture & Food Production and other senior officers. Following the welcome, the delegation proceeded to the Krushi Samiksha Kendra- India's first centralised monitoring system in agriculture that was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha, Shri Naveen Patnaik for a presentation on Odisha's digital public infrastructure. The department demonstrated use cases enabled for farmers in the state through digital systems including pest management, digital extension, on-call artificial insemination, and scheme delivery. These demonstrations were focused on how the state government has been able to leverage technology to provide inclusive and impactful schemes and services for farmers. The forward-looking roadmap for digital agriculture in the state was also discussed with the focus being on Odisha emerging as one of the first states to implement an end-to-end technology stack in agriculture, livestock, and fisheries. The delegation was enthused by this demonstration, which was followed by several questions from Mr Gates.

Following the demonstration, Mr Gates interacted with two successful women-farmers in the state who have improved their income and practices through the digital public infrastructure set up by the department. The delegation from BMGF also visited the Millets Cafe in Krushi Bhawan. Dr Padhee, Principal Secretary gave an overview of the success story of Odisha Millets Mission, with an emphasis on how it is improving the livelihood of tribal communities in the state.

Both the Government and the Foundation expressed their enthusiasm for continuing this partnership to meet shared goals aimed at improving the welfare for farmers.

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