

## **For Favour of Publication**

**Patna, May 18.** A one-day workshop on **Equitable Healthcare and Education: Access, Equity, and the Last Mile** was organized by the Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI) today.

In an illuminating address, Prof. Santosh Kr. Gautam of the University of Notre Dame in the USA reported that achieving economic prosperity depends on high labor productivity of its citizens, which in turn depends on their satisfactory cognitive development. Research has shown that adequate nutrition in the first thousand days of life, which includes the fetal stage as well, is critical for developing satisfactory cognitive development later on. The third trimester of pregnancy is the most critical point at which mothers must be provided with nutritious meals. Fifty percent of children under 5 years in Bihar are anemic, he added. He stated that a pilot project is going on, where children in Nalanda District are being provided with a multi-nutrient Wheatamix powder to address the issue of cognitive development. The results of this study will be out in another two years.

In the inaugural session, Shri Nitish Mishra, Hon'ble Minister of IT and Urban Development & Housing in the Government of Bihar announced that his government is employing IT as a tool in the delivery of public services. It is also aiming to bridge the digital divide between rural and urban areas of the state. Shri Kumar Ravi, Secretary, Health Department stated that the private sector is being harnessed to enable healthcare access for every citizen of the state. Shri Shashank Shekhar Sinha, the CEO of Bihar Swasthya Suraksha Samiti talked about how his organization has been implementing the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) in the state with technical assistance from ADRI.

Dr. Devendra Khandait of the Gates Foundation proudly announced that Bihar has achieved huge success in health but there is still a lot that remains to be done. Shri H.R. Srinivasa, ACS, Social Welfare Department pointed out that the condition of Bihar's children is not as rosy as we think it to be.

Dr. Ashmita Gupta, Member-Secretary of ADRI welcomed the guests and said that Bihar is standing at a very crucial inflection point. A lot has been achieved in infrastructure in health, schools, roads, electricity. Now, the next phase will be on the human aspects and focusing on how technology can enable it.

ADRI faculty gave a presentation on what insights the Institute has developed in disease surveillance, digitization and citizen engagement in health, healthcare access, and immunization to the last mile.

About 125 scholars, researchers, and policy makers attended the workshop. A Vote of Thanks was brought up by Dr. Ashmita Gupta.

(Abhishek Prasad)