

Bill Gates:Next Challenge is Malaria

15 February 2013 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau

Bill Gates:Next Challenge is Malaria



Known as the 2nd richest man in world, with an estimated net worth of \$66 billion, Bill Gates, co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation(BMGF) is not the easiest man to gain access to. However 4 days ago, in a unique initiative he reached out to the general public through the social news and entertainment website,Reddit, with a blanket, "Ask me anything", thus throwing open the floor to an interesting discussion, ranging from his outlook of India, his ideas for increasing access to vaccines, and how once polio is eradicated, he has set his eyes on fighting malaria.

About vaccination strategies in India, where BMGF is closely involved in the polio eradication efforts, Bill Gates said, a lot still needs to be done. He added, "India is making progress but there is still a lot to do particularly up in the North. They still need to add some of the vaccines that poorer countries are already using and saving lots of lives. India did a great job on polio and is increasing the health budget. We work closely with the federal and state governments to help out..."

BMGF is also closely associated with the Bharat Biotech's path breaking Rotavirus vaccine project as one of its the funding partners. Bharat Biotech hopes to offer the vaccine at \$1 per dose by 2014.

Malaria is an important goal for him, as he has noted in a previous interview, that he wants a malaria vaccine to be developed, which can be then distributed to those who need it. He elaborated further to a question during the exchange, "Polio is the first thing to get done since we are close. Within 6 years we will have the last case. After that we will go after malaria and measles. Malaria kills over 500,000 kids every year mostly in Africa and did not get enough attention until the last decade. We also need vaccines to prevent HIV and TB which are making progress."

He counts the success of polio eradication as one of the greatest achievements of the BMGF, "So far our biggest impact has been getting vaccines for things like diarrhea and pneumonia out which has saved millions of lives. Polio will be a great achievement along with key partners when that gets done."

Along the way, he also touched upon topics as diverse as his portrayal in a Hollywood movie, his bucket list and how cheeseburgers are among the cheapest things that give him pleasure.