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PRESS RELEASE

The Social Welfare Department, Government of Meghalaya, with the support of the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, **under the *National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR)***, successfully organized a one-day workshop on the theme “*Digital Dangers: How Cyber Crime Fuels Drug Abuse*” on the 28th of August 2025 at Landmark Victoria Hills, Nongrim Hills, Shillong.

The programme was conducted in active collaboration with the Drug Reduction, Elimination & Action Mission (DREAM), Government of Meghalaya, the Meghalaya Police (Cyber Crime Division), Dreamzware Software Solutions, Hyderabad, and Kripa Foundation.

Smti. Camelia Doreen Lyngwa, MCS, Director & Joint Secretary, Social Welfare Department, and Additional Mission Director, Drug Reduction, Elimination & Action Mission (DREAM), Government of Meghalaya, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. In her address, she highlighted the State Government’s steadfast commitment to developmental and welfare initiatives, with particular emphasis on the Department’s dedicated efforts to uplift and support the people of Meghalaya. She also drew attention to the growing menace of drug abuse and its devastating impact on society, stressing that there is an urgent need for a collaborative effort among all stakeholders, as the fight against drug abuse is not the sole responsibility of the Government. She cautioned that if this issue is not addressed collectively and at the earliest, there is a grave risk of losing an entire generation of youth, who are meant to be the future building blocks of the State, to the scourge of drugs.

The workshop witnessed enthusiastic participation from Principals, Teachers, and Heads of Departments from various schools and colleges, along with representatives from NGOs, Professional Counsellors, and Parents. The technical sessions were led by **Sub-Inspector, Mr. Sylvester Chyne and Forensic Consultant, Mr. Shreyas Muthye from the Meghalaya Police (Cyber Crime Division), and Mr. Nobarun Dey, Director (Technical Support), Dreamzware Software Solutions, Hyderabad.**

Although Meghalaya has not yet recorded any instances of drug abuse facilitated through the Dark Web, the Social Welfare Department deemed it crucial to sensitise teachers, parents, and stakeholders to this emerging threat. Increasingly, young people are being introduced to drugs not on the streets, but through digital avenues such as social media, online gaming networks, messaging platforms, and even encrypted apps—often linked to wider illicit activities. These online spaces frequently circulate content that glamorises drug use, spreads misinformation, and provides unfiltered access to harmful communities. If left unchecked, they can quickly become breeding grounds for peer pressure, the glorification of drug culture, and even direct access to substances through illegal online channels.

What further compounds this challenge is the profound psychological impact of the digital world. Constant comparison, cyber bullying, isolation, and digital addiction are driving many young people to seek refuge in substance use as a means of escape. It is therefore imperative that Educators, Policymakers, Social Workers, Law Enforcement, Health Professionals, Community Leaders, and above all, Parents, take a proactive role in guiding and monitoring the online activities of children and youth. By fostering responsible internet use and vigilance, we can help safeguard them from the dangers of the dark web and the lure of substance abuse.

The objective of the workshop was to equip them with the right knowledge as a preventive measure, enabling them to guide young people away from potential risks. The workshop also emphasised the importance of cultivating healthy digital hygiene practices—such as responsible online behaviour, awareness of cyber risks, and safe internet usage—which are essential in today's interconnected world. By taking this proactive step, the Department aims to strengthen community resilience and ensure that educators and parents remain prepared to address these modern challenges arising from the misuse of digital platforms in fuelling drug abuse.

Most importantly, the experts underscored the critical need to adopt strong cyber-protective tools such as antivirus software and security safeguards. They also urged participants to practice digital prudence and vigilance, so as to protect themselves and others from falling prey to cybercrimes such as phishing, digital arrest, and other emerging threats.

Deliberations during the workshop focused on the growing challenges posed by the Dark Web, its role in enabling cybercrime, and its nexus with drug abuse. The event featured expert presentations, case studies, interactive sessions, and insightful discussions among participants. This exchange of knowledge and perspectives made the workshop impactful, further reinforcing collective efforts to combat drug abuse through digital awareness and preventive action.

