

PRESS RELEASE



State-Level Consultation Reviews a Decade of Juvenile Justice Act Implementation in Meghalaya

Shillong, September 3: The Juvenile Justice Committee of the High Court of Meghalaya, in collaboration with the Social Welfare Department and the Health Department, Government of Meghalaya, on Thursday organised a State-Level Multi-Stakeholder Consultation on “*Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: A Decade of Implementation and the Way Forward*” at the Auditorium of the High Court of Meghalaya.



Addressing the gathering, Chief Justice of the High Court of Meghalaya, Hon'ble Justice Revati Mohite Dere, said the consultation was not merely a review of the Juvenile Justice Act but also an opportunity to examine society's collective commitment towards children.

“Today, we dwell on the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act over the last decade and discuss the way forward. This meeting is not just a ritualistic review of the statute, but an audit of our conscience. We are here to review our promise to our children,” she said.



Justice Dere said the Act was enacted to ensure that children in conflict with law are treated as children requiring reform and rehabilitation rather than as criminals deserving punishment, while children in need of care and protection are provided with the necessary support to secure their future.

She also highlighted the shift from retributive justice to restorative justice and rehabilitation, saying that the focus must be on understanding the circumstances that led a child to commit an offence rather than merely focusing on the offence itself.

However, Justice Dere said several challenges remain, including delays in age determination inquiries, the quality of care in child care institutions, lack of effective convergence among departments, substance abuse among children in conflict with law, and the need for improved infrastructure and capacity building.

The Chief Justice said institutionalisation should be the last resort, particularly in Meghalaya, which has strong community and kinship networks. She called for greater coordination among the police, education, health, labour and other departments to address issues such as school dropout, mental health, substance abuse and child labour.

She further called for greater accountability through a real-time State-level monitoring system and regular interaction among Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees.

“If we fail a child today, we will face an offender tomorrow,” she said, calling upon all stakeholders to work collectively to ensure care, protection, rehabilitation and a better future for every child.



Hon'ble Justice H. S. Thangkhiew, Judge of the High Court of Meghalaya-cum-Chairperson of the Juvenile Justice Committee, High Court of Meghalaya, and Additional Chief Secretary Sampath Kumar, IAS, also shared their views during the programme. Hon'ble Justice B. Bhattacharjee, Judge of the High Court of Meghalaya, Saloni Verma, IAS, Director, Social Welfare Department, Dr. Neela E. Kharsahnoh, Director of Health Services (MI), officials from various departments of the Government of Meghalaya, and other invitees were also present.



The consultation also featured technical sessions, with resource persons sharing their insights on various aspects of the juvenile justice system.