

PRESS RELEASE



Social Welfare Department Hosts Workshop on Creating a Well-Functioning Care Economy

Shillong, July 23: The Directorate of Social Welfare, Government of Meghalaya, in collaboration with the Department of Sociology, Shillong College, organised a workshop on "Creating a Well-Functioning Care Economy" at Shillong College on Thursday. The programme brought together government officials, academicians, students and other stakeholders to discuss the importance of building a robust care economy for inclusive and sustainable development.



Addressing the gathering, Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya, Dr. Sampath Kumar, IAS, outlined the state's vision of adopting a life-cycle approach to social welfare, emphasising care and support at every stage of life—from early childhood to old age.

Dr. Kumar said Meghalaya's development strategy recognises the different needs of citizens throughout their lives. He noted that nearly 25 per cent of the state's population falls within the Early Childhood Development (ECD) age group of 0–8 years, making investment in young children one of the government's highest priorities.

Explaining the significance of the care economy, he said it should not only be viewed as a sector that creates employment opportunities for caregivers but also as an investment that generates long-term economic returns. Proper nutrition, early stimulation and quality care during a child's formative years, he said, enhance cognitive development, improve educational outcomes and increase future productivity, ultimately contributing to stronger economic growth.

Highlighting the importance of parental involvement, Dr. Kumar stressed that fathers have a vital role to play in early childhood development and encouraged them to spend more quality time with their children, particularly during the early years when brain development is at its peak. Citing scientific evidence, he said nearly 90 per cent of brain development takes place before a child reaches the age of five.

He further stated that Meghalaya is among the few states in the country implementing a comprehensive Early Childhood Development (ECD) pilot programme, which has attracted interest from several other states keen to learn from Meghalaya's model.

Dr. Kumar also said the initiative has already produced encouraging results, with more families enrolling their children in Anganwadi Centres and noticeable improvements in children's engagement and early learning. He expressed confidence that strengthening the care economy would not only improve child welfare but also contribute to inclusive economic growth and long-term social development in Meghalaya.



The workshop served as a platform for meaningful discussions on strengthening care systems and recognising caregiving as both a social responsibility and a key driver of economic development.



Among those present on the occasion were Commissioner and Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya, Pravin Bakshi, IAS; Director of Social Welfare, Saloni Verma, IAS; Dr. C. Joshua Thomas; government officials; faculty members of Shillong College; students; and other invited guests.

