

## PRESS RELEASE



### Legal Awareness Programme on COTPA ACT and Dawn Scheme held at Rymbai

**Khliehriat, May 19, 2026:** A Legal Awareness Programme on the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003 and DAWN (Drug Awareness and Wellness Navigation – For a Drug Free India) Scheme, 2025 was organized today at Rymbai Village by the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), East Jaintia Hills District, Khliehriat under the aegis of the Meghalaya State Legal Services Authority (MSLSA).

The program was attended by Dental Surgeon cum District Nodal Officer (DNO), NTCP/NOHP, East Jaintia Hills District, Dr. N. R Dhar, Panel Lawyers, DLSA, East Jaintia Hills District, Smti. P. Rymbai and Shri P.N swer, teachers and students.

Speaking during the programme, Dental Surgeon cum District Nodal Officer (DNO), NTCP/NOHP, Dr. N. R Dhar highlighted the alarming health risks associated with tobacco consumption and stressed the importance of prevention, protection and cessation strategies. He further stated that more than 10 million new cancer cases are reported globally every year with



nearly 6 million deaths linked to cancer and tobacco use. Dr. Dhar also explained that tobacco products contain harmful chemicals such as nicotine, carbon monoxide, methanol and naphthalene, while secondhand smoke also poses serious health risks to non-smokers.

Dr. Dhar further warned against the increasing use of emerging tobacco products and e-cigarettes among adolescents,

stating that these products are falsely marketed as safer alternatives despite causing adverse health effects including respiratory diseases, infertility, neurological disorders and cancer. Emphasizing the benefits of quitting tobacco, he stated that heart rate and blood pressure begin to normalize within 20 minutes of quitting, while lung function improves significantly after a few weeks. He also spoke on behavioral counseling and the 5A approach Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist and Arrange, to support tobacco users in quitting successfully, and urged the public, especially the youth, to work together towards achieving a tobacco-free society.

In her address, Panel Lawyer, DLSA, East Jaintia Hills District, Smti. P. Rymbai spoke on the provisions of the COTPA Act, 2003 and informed that smoking or consuming tobacco products in public places is an offence punishable with fines and legal action. She also highlighted that



shopkeepers are prohibited from selling tobacco products to minors and students. Referring to Section 77 of the Juvenile Justice Act, she stated that involving children in the sale of tobacco products can attract imprisonment of up to seven years along with a fine of ₹1 lakh.

She further spoke about the Legal Services Unit for Children (LSUC) Scheme and informed that child-friendly courtrooms

have been established to ensure that children do not face trauma while attending court proceedings. In addition, she highlighted the Legal Services Unit for Mental Illness and Intellectual Disabilities (LSUM), through which assistance can be availed by dialing helpline number 15100.



The programme concluded with a collective pledge by the participants to abstain from tobacco use and to spread awareness on the harmful effects of tobacco among family members, friends and the community.