

One-Day Orientation Programme on “Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Drug Addiction: Prevention and Intervention” organized by Sikkim Judicial Academy in Collaboration with Sikkim State Legal Services Authority-2025

Date: 10th March 2025



Under the patronage of **Hon’ble Mr. Justice Biswanath Somadder, Chief Justice of the High Court of Sikkim and Patron-In-Chief of Sikkim Judicial Academy (SJA) and Sikkim State Legal Services Authority (SSLSA)**, the Sikkim Judicial Academy in collaboration with the **Sikkim State Legal Services Authority (SSLSA)** organized a *one-day orientation programme on “Mental Health, Substance Abuse, and Drug Addiction: Prevention and Intervention”* at Sikkim Judicial Academy, Gangtok. The programme aimed to create awareness and provide insights into the increasing issues of mental health crises, substance abuse, and drug addiction, particularly in Sikkim.

The programme was attended by officers and staff of the District Judiciary of Sikkim, stakeholders from various state government departments, advocates, and students, including Para-Legal Volunteers (PLVs) and Ms. Soni Subedi, HOD from Law Department from The ICFAI University, Sikkim.

The event was graced by the Hon’ble Chief Justice Biswanath Somadder as the Chief Guest and Hon’ble Mr. Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan, Judge, High Court of Sikkim and Chairperson/Judge-In-Charge, Sikkim Judicial Academy, as the presiding dignitary. **The resource persons for the programme were Dr. Satyajit Ash, Consulting Psychiatrist, Kolkata and Professor Sujit Sarkhel, Head of Department, Institute of Psychiatry, Kolkata.**

Key Highlights of the Programme:

1. Address by Hon’ble Chief Justice Biswanath Somadder: In his address, Hon’ble Chief Justice Biswanath Somadder highlighted the complexities of suicide laws in India, emphasizing the need to balance decriminalization with accountability. He also pointed out the lack of adherence to

responsible suicide reporting guidelines in Sikkim, urging media houses to act sensitively. Furthermore, he shed light on the challenges posed by social media, which often amplifies mental health issues and substance abuse concerns.

2. Sessions by Resource Persons: The resource persons, Dr. Satyajit Ash and Professor Sujit Sarkhel, conducted insightful sessions on two major mental health issues affecting Sikkim on Suicide Prevention & Substance Abuse and Drug Addiction

- **Suicide Prevention:** The experts revealed that Sikkim has the highest suicide rate in India, making it an urgent public health concern. They discussed the role of healthcare professionals, NGOs, and the media in suicide prevention. Key points included Suicide First-Aid Techniques: Distraction, social engagement, and seeking professional help. Identifying Warning Signs: Recognizing suicidal tendencies at an early stage is crucial for prevention.
- **Substance Abuse and Drug Addiction:** The session on substance abuse focused on the effects of drugs on the brain, addiction symptoms, and risk factors such as: Family conflict, Low self-esteem, Peer influence. The experts emphasized the need for community-based interventions and the importance of rehabilitation and awareness campaigns.

The one-day orientation programme successfully addressed the pressing issues of mental health, substance abuse, and drug addiction in Sikkim. The deliberations by legal and medical experts provided valuable perspectives on prevention, intervention, and the role of various stakeholders. With Sikkim having the highest suicide rate in India, such programmes are crucial in spreading awareness, reducing stigma, and ensuring timely interventions. The active participation of law enforcement agencies, advocates, healthcare professionals, and students demonstrated a collective commitment towards addressing these societal challenges. The event concluded with a call to action for policymakers, media, and the public to work together in promoting mental health well-being and drug-free communities in Sikkim.