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TU organises workshop

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TEZPUR, April 12: The Centre for Inclusive Development, Tezpur University (TU) organised a daylong workshop on 'Child Marriage: A Curse on the Health and Wellbeing of Victims' on Monday. The workshop was held in consonance with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Number 3, which is 'Good Health and Wellbeing'.

Riniki Bhuyan Sarma, managing trustee of Sneha Bandhan, Guwahati graced the occasion as the chief guest, while Dr Nina Athale, an eminent child protection consultant from Mumbai, Dr Bhuban C Barooah, dean, Royal School of Law and Administration, Royal Global University, Guwahati, and Dr Siddeswara Linganna, faculty member of Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health, Tezpur participated in the workshop as resource persons.

Prof Shambhu Nath Singh, Vice Chancellor, Tezpur University, inaugurated the workshop and highlighted the laws that make child marriage a punishable offence.

"We have laws like the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. However, despite having these laws it is unfortunate that child marriage has remained a social menace," said Prof Singh, hoping that the workshop will build momentum for action and advocacy to fight against the practice of child marriage.

Speaking on the occasion, Riniki Bhuyan Sarma called the practice of child marriage a curse, and urged upon all stakeholders to adopt a hands-on approach to fight against it.

"Child marriage not only affects the health and wellbeing of a girl, but also leaves a deep psychological and

emotional trauma on the victims," she said.

Prof DK Bhattacharyya, former vice chancellor (acting), Tezpur University, emphasised the role of outreach activities (amongst higher educational institutions) to reach the vulnerable sections in order to create awareness against child marriage.

Sonitpur Deputy Commissioner Deba Kumar Mishra briefed the gathering about the efforts made by the State government to curb child marriages. He informed that child protection officers had been given the responsibility of ensuring that the victims receive legal aid.

"We have also engaged teachers and anganwadi workers to sensitise people regarding the adverse effects of child marriage," Mishra said.

Officials of the Social Welfare department, advocates, school teachers, NGO members and students also attended the programme.