



PRESS RELEASE



ARTICLE ON WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY, 2023

World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) is an important event which is observed every year on the **31st May** to spread awareness on the tobacco epidemic and the preventable death and disease it causes and what the people can do to claim their right to health and healthy living and protect future generation. This year's event focus on educating our youth about the dangers of tobacco use and promoting a Tobacco Free environment.

In India, tobacco consumption remains a significant public health concern, this day holds particular significance. It serves as a reminder to the nation to evaluate progress, reinforce efforts, and strive for a tobacco-free society.

In Meghalaya, 47% of adults (age 15+) [Global Adult Tobacco Survey, 2017] and 33.6% of youths (aged 13-15) [Global Youth Tobacco Survey, 2021] consumes tobacco (smoke and/or smokeless).

The consequences of tobacco use in Meghalaya are reflected in the burden of tobacco-related diseases. The State witnesses a high incidence of oral cancers, respiratory disorders, and cardiovascular diseases which are directly attributed to tobacco consumption. Tobacco related deaths in the State exceed 8,000 per annum. The health impact is not limited to individuals alone but extends to families and communities, placing a strain on healthcare resources and hindering overall well-being and progress. As we mark World No Tobacco Day in 2023, it is crucial to address this issue head-on and work towards implementing effective strategies to combat tobacco use in the Country and specially in Meghalaya.

Addressing the tobacco problem in Meghalaya requires a comprehensive approach. Children are a major target for tobacco industry. Studies show that 90% of tobacco users start during ages 10 to 22 years. Once addicted, the chances of giving up are less than 5% - throughout their life. Hence, the Tobacco Free Educational Institutions (ToFEI) program, a comprehensive intervention to bring about behaviour change in the youths towards tobacco, was implemented in the State.

Meghalaya is using a holistic approach to tobacco control and in addition to ToFEI, strict enforcement of tobacco control laws, such as the Cigarettes and Tobacco Products Act, 2003 (COTPA) which prohibits smoking in public places, regulating tobacco advertising, and preventing accessibility of tobacco products to minors is being done in close coordination with the Police and District Administrations.

Creating smoke-free environments is a critical aspect of tobacco control. Workplaces, public spaces, and educational institutions should strictly enforce smoke-free policies to protect non-smokers from second-hand smoke. Sale of tobacco products within 100 yards of educational institutions and Smoking in Public Places is banned and police are taking strict action against violators.

On this World No Tobacco Day, let us recognize the challenges faced by Meghalaya and renew our commitment to combat the tobacco problem in the state. By empowering individuals, strengthening tobacco control policies, and investing in comprehensive tobacco cessation programs, we can create a healthier and tobacco-free Meghalaya for generations to come.

Dr. Lana E. Lyngdoh Nongbri
SNO, NTCP - NHM