

PRESS RELEASE



Directorate of Social Welfare Welcomes 24 Children Returned from Karnataka

Shillong, Dec 02: The Directorate of Social Welfare, Government of Meghalaya, today formally received 24 children who were brought back from Chikkaballapur district in Karnataka. The children arrived safely in Shillong and were welcomed at the Directorate's office in the presence of officials and representatives from various child-rights organisations.



State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) Chairperson Agatha K. Sangma, addressing the gathering, said the safe return of the children was the central focus of the day's programme. She expressed gratitude to the departments and agencies in both Karnataka and Meghalaya whose coordinated efforts ensured the children reached home safely and in good health.

Sangma raised concern over the rising number of cases involving children being taken out of the state without proper procedures. She recalled a similar incident a few months ago in which children from Meghalaya were moved without official oversight, stressing the need for stronger preventive mechanisms.



She informed that the SCPCR had written to the Chief Minister recommending the formulation of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the movement of children below 18 years to institutions outside the state. The recommendation follows a stakeholder meeting attended by officials from the law, social welfare, education, health, and police departments.

The proposed SOP, Sangma explained, would ensure greater transparency and coordination by requiring prior intimation to District Child Protection Officers, proper documentation of the children and the receiving institutions, verification of the legal status of those institutions, clarity on the purpose and duration of the children's stay, and mandatory medical examinations before travel. It would also establish communication between DCPOs of both states to track the welfare of the children. She noted that the absence of such a monitoring mechanism has allowed improper transfers to occur.

Sangma also emphasised the need for parents to remain informed and vigilant. She said that during interactions with the families of the affected children, many parents did not know the name or location of the institutions where their children had been sent. She urged parents to ensure they are fully aware of their children's whereabouts and safety.

Reaffirming the SCPCR's commitment, she said the Commission would continue working with the government to strengthen child-protection measures and prevent similar incidents in the future.



Director of Social Welfare, Camelia Doreen Lyngwa, MCS, said the department received notice of the case in August. She noted that most of the children come from marginalised families, making safe housing a challenge. Lyngwa added that parents had hoped for better educational opportunities for their children outside the state, trusting that they would be placed in secure and supportive environments. However, the DCPO of Chikkaballapur found that the facility where the children were staying was in poor condition and was not registered with the Government of Karnataka, raising significant concerns.

She further stated that technology played a crucial role in coordinating communication and ensuring the smooth return of the children to Meghalaya.