

News Report

An “Online National Level Awareness Program’ on “Preventing Social Stigmatization of CoVID-19 Patients” was organised by the NSS Cell of Sikkim University on 17th October, 2020. The program was chaired by the Hon’ble Vice-Chancellor Sikkim University. The inaugural address of the program was delivered by the Hon’ble Minister, Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, Government of Sikkim Shri Kunga Nima Lepcha. Shri Kuber Bhandari, Secretary, Department of Sports and Youth Affairs and the Registrar, Sikkim University, Shri T.K. Kaul also graced the program with their august presence.

Dr. Nidhi Saxena, NSS co-ordinator, Sikkim University, formally welcomed all the esteemed guests and gave a brief introduction about the program.

The Registrar of Sikkim University, Shri T.K. Kaul discussed the situation of Covid-19 in our country and the state of Sikkim as well. He reminded everyone that the war has not yet ended and we can do much for our society and country.

Shri Kuber Bhandari, Secretary, Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, Government of Sikkim addressed the participants and gave a brief talk on how the stigma related to the virus is affecting the patients and the people as a community. He also pointed out that social media has played a potential role in fostering the stigmatization of the patients.

The Hon’ble Minister, Department of Sports and Youth Affairs, Government of Sikkim Shri Kunga Nima Lepcha discussed about the beginning of the CoVID-19 and its spread across the world. He highlighted the CoVID-19 scenario of Sikkim and gave the credit to the Honourable Chief Minister of Sikkim for his vision that helped the State handle the CoVID situation in Sikkim with success. He pointed out that the Honourable Chief Minister made the decisions to close the borders in the early days of the epidemic and screening was made compulsory and this helped in preventing the spread of the disease. He also discussed the negative effect such stigma related to the virus would have and suggested that we should combat the stigma. He appreciated NSS and its volunteers for diligently working throughout this epidemic for the betterment of the society and its people. He also gave the example of how the VIP’s of Sikkim who had been affected by the virus have recovered and how they were accepted heartily by the community. He exhorted the people of Sikkim to assist the patients, instead of alienating them in fear of the virus.

The program was chaired by the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor of Sikkim University, Professor Avinash Khare. The Hon’ble Vice-Chancellor discussed how current situation and stigmatisation has

affected the people afflicted with the disease. He impressed upon the participants that stigmatization of CoVID patients is a self defeating exercise since stigmatization individuals from coming forward leading to further spreading of the disease. He urged everyone to be vigilant but not scared and carry out their duties while observing the norms of hygiene. He thanked the Hon'ble Minister Shri Kunga Nima Lepcha and secretary Shri Kuber Bhandari for taking time out of their busy schedule to address the participants. He also applauded the vision of the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim in guiding Sikkim and its people through the current crisis.

After the inaugural session the program continued and with several deliberations by the subject experts in the area of medical, legal and education. The sessions were instructive and benefitted the participants immensely.

The valedictory Program was addressed by Prof. Harbansh Dixit, Member UP higher Education Service Commission Prayagraj, who said the first responsibility of protection is on those who are the leaders of the society or those who are in charge of creating awareness in the society. It is thus our duty, foremost, to come forward and take steps to fight against this deadly virus for our society. Justice A P Subba, Hon'ble Chairperson, Law Commission and Hon'ble Lokayukta of Sikkim in his address said coronavirus is not a new term and we all are familiar now that how it is affecting the whole world. It is thus not a problem of an individual but is a problem for the whole world and now we have to learn to live with it but with all due care and precautions that are suggested by doctors and informed through advisories issued from time to time.

The chair of the valedictory session Prof J P tamang pointed out the importance of the medical workers and front line warriors during this covid time. They treat the patients at considerable risk to their life and he rightly emphasised the society should take greater care of their warriors. We should understand we don't have very good and well equipped health structures in the country thus in saving lives awareness and information may play a vital role in fighting the war.

The program ended with vote of thanks from Dr. Devchand Subba, Program Officer, Sikkim University NSS.