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## Dibrugarh District Holds Awareness Drive on Human Trafficking and Witch-Hunting

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The Dibrugarh district administration, in collaboration with the District Women and Child Welfare Department and the District Mission: Women Empowerment Centre, organized an awareness meeting on Wednesday to address the pressing issues of human trafficking and witch-hunting. The initiative brought together government officials, legal experts, and grassroots workers to discuss prevention strategies and available legal remedies.

The meeting, held at the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office, was attended by key district officials, including Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP, Crime) Atul Kumar, Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) of Naharkatia sub-division Sanghamitra Baruah, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Biraj Baruah, District Social Welfare Officer Prashanta Bora, and District Child Protection Officer Alex Doley. Also present were project officers from the Child Development Project, police personnel from various stations, newly elected panchayat representatives, and anganwadi workers.

District Social Welfare Officer Prashanta Bora delivered the welcome address, outlining the goals of the session. SDO Sanghamitra Baruah addressed the cultural roots of witch-hunting, calling for education and sensitization to eradicate the practice. "Branding women as witches is a brutal practice fueled by ignorance. We must work collectively to change this mindset and protect our most vulnerable section of society from exploitation and superstition-based violence. Education and awareness are our strongest weapons against these archaic practices that cause immense suffering to innocent individuals," she said.

Advocate Alok Kar Dowerah and Child Protection Committee member Rupa Kaur served as resource persons, providing legal insights and case experiences. Dowerah emphasized the need for legal literacy to combat such crimes, stating, "Legal awareness is the first line of defense against these crimes. Communities must understand that witch-hunting is not only morally wrong but also a punishable offense under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Many victims of witch-hunting and trafficking do not know their rights. Strengthening legal literacy at the grassroots level is crucial to combat these crimes."

Kaur underscored the importance of public vigilance and follow-up support for survivors. "Human trafficking networks thrive in secrecy. Public vigilance and timely reporting can help dismantle these operations. Awareness alone is not enough; we need consistent follow-ups and support systems for survivors. Frontline workers are our eyes and ears in villages. Training them to recognize early signs of trafficking or abuse can save lives," she said.

The meeting concluded with participants pledging to carry forward the awareness message into their communities, aiming to extend the initiative's impact beyond administrative offices and into the lives of those most at risk.