

Chief Justice inaugurates mega project on 'Revival of Legal Aid Clinics' at KU

Justice Tashi Rabstan, VC Prof Nilofer Khan deliver special addresses



Srinagar, Apr 11: Honourable Chief Justice of the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, Justice N Kotiswar Singh on Tuesday inaugurated a mega project on 'Establishment, Revival and Operation of Legal Aid Clinics in Kashmir' at the University of Kashmir.

Justice Tashi Rabstan, Judge, High Court of J&K and Ladakh, and Vice-Chancellor Prof Nilofer Khan were the guests of honour at the event, organised by the varsity's School of Law. Dr Vijaylakshmi Brara was the special guest at the inaugural session.

In his presidential address, Justice N Kotiswar Singh invoked the Preamble of the Constitution which calls for securing justice for all citizens to highlight the

importance of providing free legal aid to vast sections of people “who are still unaware of their legal rights and privileges”.

“This is a big challenge,” the Chief Justice said.

Praising the University of Kashmir for the ambitious project, the Chief Justice, who was the Chief Guest on the occasion, highlighted the important role that law students can play in making legal aid clinics more vibrant and effective by going to grassroots for legal awareness among the people to increase their access to justice. He also said that justice-delivery is not the exclusive prerogative of the judges or lawyers alone but “everyone in the society can contribute to justice delivery in a small way.”

In his special address, Justice Tashi Rabstan, underscored the importance of legal aid clinics in enhancing the people’s access to justice.

Tracing the history, evolution and status of legal aid services in the country and the related legislations, Justice Rabstan said the active involvement of law students in legal aid clinics can go a long way in creating a network of supporters to further boost the free legal aid movement in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

“Legal aid clinics are one of the important ways to fulfill our Constitutional pledge of ensuring access to justice for one and all,” he said.

In his inaugural address, Vice-Chancellor Prof Nilofer Khan said the legal aid clinics serve the twin purpose of imparting practical training to young law students on applicability of law while promoting their active involvement in educating people from underprivileged and weaker sections of society about their legal rights and entitlements.

“We need to see how best we can utilise our young students, para-legals, scholars and pro-bono lawyers to go to the remotest parts of the Valley under this important project to raise legal awareness among people, including specially-abled women who need our equal attention and focus,” she said, vowing to personally monitor the project outcomes.

She said in the context of India’s G20 Presidency, which puts youth at the forefront of policy-making, the revival of legal aid clinics “offers a unique opportunity to our young law students to provide constructive policy inputs and utilise the Youth20 platform to contribute to nation-building.”

The VC thanked Justice N Kotiswar Singh and Justice Rabstan for visiting the University for the first time and addressing the law students. She also complimented the School of Law for holding the mega event.

Head and Dean, School of Law, Prof Beauty Bandy delivered the welcome address, while Dr Mohammad Yasin, Director of the Project, highlighted its objectives and conducted proceedings of the inaugural session. He said to begin with, five legal aid clinics will be established in affiliated law colleges of the University.

Dr Shehnaz, faculty, School of Law, delivered the vote of thanks at the inaugural session, which was attended by senior officers of the High Court Registry and University of Kashmir, including Dean Academics, Dean Colleges, Dean Research, Registrar, Dean Students Welfare, Media Advisor and others.

Earlier, a ceremonial guard of honour was presented to the Chief Justice by a contingent of the University Police.