

A Drug De-addiction Awareness Camp was organised at Islamia Public School, Leh, on 8 January 2026 to sensitise students, parents, and teachers about the growing problem of substance abuse in the district and its serious health and social consequences.

The programme was attended by Shri Ghulam Mohd, JKAS, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Leh, as the Chief Guest, along with Shri Shamim Ahmad, SHO Leh. Dr Padma Angmo, Head of the Psychiatry and De-addiction Department, SNM Hospital, Leh, delivered the keynote address and presented recent data from the Psychiatry OPD, SNM Hospital, Leh, highlighting emerging trends in substance abuse.

As per the data shared, the number of patients seeking treatment for substance abuse at the Psychiatry OPD has shown a steady and concerning increase over the past few years. The total number of cases rose from 108 cases during March 2018–September 2020 to 537 cases between April 2023 and March 2024, further increasing to 796 cases during April 2024–March 2025. Although a slight decline to 633 cases was observed during April–December 2025, the overall trend remains upward.

Substance-wise analysis revealed that alcohol and tobacco were the most commonly abused substances until 2020–21. However, a significant shift in the pattern of abuse has been observed in recent years, with a sharp rise in opioid use. Opioid-related cases increased from 9 cases during 2018–2020 to 87 cases in 2024–25, and further to 127 cases during April–December 2025, including a growing number of injectable drug users (IDUs).

Dr Angmo further highlighted the emergence of injectable opioid use, particularly among adolescents and young adults, which poses severe public health risks. Risk behaviours such as sharing of needles were reported among many users, substantially increasing vulnerability to blood-borne infections.

The camp also drew attention to the rising incidence of Hepatitis C infections among drug users. Over the past two months, in collaboration with the NGO JKSYMP, 24 intravenous drug users were tested, of whom 22 tested positive for Hepatitis C. To date, 11 affected youths, including two females, have been initiated on antiviral therapy. It was noted that continued substance use adversely affects treatment compliance, increasing the risk of treatment failure and further transmission.

The programme witnessed active participation from students, parents, and teaching staff of Islamia Public School. The speakers emphasised the critical role of families, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and law-enforcement agencies in prevention, early identification, and rehabilitation.

The awareness camp concluded with an interactive session, reinforcing the message of early intervention, informed choices, and collective responsibility in building a drug-free and healthy society.

