

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF THE 21ST ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION-INDIA, 2017 ON 5TH MARCH, 2017 AT HOTEL CLASSIC GRANDE, IMPHAL

Dr. Sanjay Sharma, President, BCF-India,

Dr. M.K. Mahajan, Founder Secretary, BCF-India,

Dr. Tomcha Singh, Organising Chairman,

Dr. Jitendra, Organising Secretary,

Members from the Media,

All the participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to associate myself with this significant event as the 21st Annual National Conference of Breast Cancer Foundation-India and I would also like to take this opportunity to convey my best wishes to all of you on the forthcoming International Women's Day which falls on the 8th March, 2017.

As you all are aware, cancer is still regarded as one of the most dreaded diseases all over the world. It can strike any one, irrespective of age, sex, profession or economic status and any part of the human body could become 'cancerous'. The modern lifestyle has also contributed in no small measure to the rising menace of this disease. Breast cancer is the commonest form of cancer afflicting the females in the Western countries and the same trend is taking shape in India too. Sadly but true, in all the metropolitan cities in the country and in most of the cities including Manipur, breast cancer has already become the commonest female cancer. It has gradually replaced cervical cancer which was once the commonest female cancer in India.

As treatment of breast cancer is not an easy option, due heed should be paid to preventive measures. A well orchestrated awareness campaign and an informed public will help in effective application of the preventive measures. Majority of breast cancers are self detected and Mammography can also

detect lesions which are not palpable. It has been empirically found that these two methods combined, 75% of breast cancer can be detected and early detection will lead to full cure of the disease. Here, I would like to add a word of caution. It must be remembered that 60% of breast lumps are not cancerous, they are benign diseases. Some of the preventive measures which look innocuous but have tremendous value addition are to avoid late marriage, encourage breast feeding, avoid high fatty food, excessive meat, tobacco and alcohol and have regular exercise. There are also definitive warning signals of breast cancer, which the womenfolk should learn to appreciate with all seriousness such as lump, puckering of skin, skin ulcer, deformity of breast and other indicative symptoms.

Only a few of you would know that I was also inclined to join the medical profession soon after finishing school. However, destiny decided otherwise as I was found underaged and too young to take up the MBBS course. I continued my education of Life Sciences on the advice of my grandfather Maulana Azad who was the 1st Minister of Education of free India. After my post graduation in Zoology, I joined research on the development of the heart of birds, specially the conducting tissues of the avian heart. I submitted my dissertation and was awarded Ph.D. Degree when I was 22 years. Till today, I retain my deep interest in life sciences. Health is an area of keen interest and concern for me. Soon after I took over my gubernatorial assignment, I mooted the concept of 'Flying Doctors' at the State Government as well as the Central Government level for reaching medical services to the far flung and remote areas of both the Valley and Hill Districts of the state. This way, the people in these areas especially the womenfolk will gain access to medical facilities which otherwise are not available. My proposal is under active consideration of the Central Government.

We all know that to build a healthy society, the educational, social, legal, economic and more importantly health parameters of women need to be factored in and prioritised. Women must be recognised and accepted as an independent social actor and given due importance. It is satisfying that the

Breast Cancer Foundation-India is wholly dedicated to the cause of women and the Foundation is an organisation formed to create awareness about breast cancer among the general public to help prevent, detect early and know about the different treatment modalities available. The organisation also aims at improving and upgrading knowledge of the treating Doctors. Breast Cancer Foundation-India is holding its 21st Annual Conference, 2017 and it is significant that the Conference is held every year around the 8th March which is observed as the International Women's Day. Well being and health of the women are important and indispensable considerations in the Observance of International Women's Day.

I am also happy that the Foundation has planned out a comprehensive programme for the Conference with the first day dwelling on scientific deliberations on breast cancer and the second day is devoted for creating awareness about breast cancer among the general public. The deliberations on the disease by the experts and professionals in the field accompanied by exchange of ideas and experience will immensely help in finding a way forward in the fight against this dreaded disease. Further, the rally I am flagging off tomorrow and the interactive session that will follow involving a wide spectrum of stakeholders like students, nursing students, NGOs, civilians and media persons can, I am sure, give a quantum boost to the awareness campaign undertaken about the disease.

I am confident that the contribution of the Breast Cancer Foundation-India will go a long way in the prevention and treating of breast cancer in Manipur and my whole hearted support is with the Foundation in their endeavour.

With these words, I thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Jai Hind.