

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF CHILDREN'S DAY AT CATHOLIC SCHOOL, CANCHIPUR ON 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2016.

Most Rev. Dominic Lumon DD, Archbishop of Imphal,

Shri Raymond D'Souza, National Co-ordinator,

Indian Catholic Youth Movement,

Principal and Staff of Catholic School,

Friends from the Media,

My dear young students,

I am glad that so many young students have gathered here to welcome me. I am always happy in the company of young students and it is a most pleasant opportunity for me to celebrate Children's Day with you all today.

On this occasion, I would like to share my thoughts with you on the significance of the celebration. Children's Day is celebrated on different dates in many countries to signify different historical events relatable to children. In India, it is celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November every year to commemorate the birth day of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The 14<sup>th</sup> of November every year is the Birth Anniversary of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who was a freedom fighter and the first Prime Minister of free India and considered the architect of modern India. 1<sup>st</sup> of June is celebrated as the International Children's Day whereas 20<sup>th</sup> of November as Universal Children's Day in many parts of the world.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was a true friend of the children. He loved to talk to the children and play with them. He was the Prime Minister of India but he brooked no barrier towards the children. He was a very warm hearted person and always inspired and motivated the children to be patriotic and good citizens of the country. You all know that children used to fondly call him 'Chacha Nehru' because of his love and affection for them. He loved the roses and once he said that children are like the buds of the flowers in the garden.

Celebrating children's day reminds us about the importance of children in the making of the future of the country. It is a call to every Indian citizen

to protect their little ones from all harms by providing better childhood. Nowadays, it is really a matter of great concern that children are made victims of many social evils like drug, child abuse, alcohol, hard labour, violence, etc. They are forced to child labour, to earn little money for hard work at a tender age. They remain away from the healthy life, parents' love, education and other childhood happiness. Children's day celebration helps us to ponder over these social ailments in the country. Children are the valuable assets as well as future of the nation and also hope of tomorrow, so they should get proper care and love. Following are the common rights of the children which they must get:

They should get proper care and love by the parents and family.

They should get healthy food, clean clothes and security.

They should get healthy living environment where they can feel safe at home, school or other places.

They should get proper and good level of education.

They should be provided special care when disabled or sick.

Childhood becomes the best phase of life which should be healthy and happy for everyone so that they can be ready to lead their nation forward. If the children are unhealthy of mind and body, they cannot give their best to their nation in future. So, the childhood phase of life is the most significant phase which every parent should nourish with their love, care and affection.

Children are considered as the building blocks of a strong nation. They are the driving force of the future society and the future of humankind depends on how we invest in our children. We must all use the systems of education to promote ideals and to inculcate among the young people the zeal to participate in a better life for themselves and their societies. Children are very small but have capability to change the nation positively. They are the responsible citizens of tomorrow as development of the country lies in their hands.

I served as the first ever Woman President, Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), an international organisation, during 1999-2002 and here I remember a view held by the Human Development Report of the UNDP, a project with which I was closely associated as the Ambassador of Human Development: **Quote** "The real wealth of a nation is its people. And the purpose of development is to create an environment for people to enjoy

long, healthy and creative lives. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in pursuit of material and financial wealth”. **Unquote.**

I worked very closely with UNICEF for save the child programme and yes, for the girl child campaign. Only two days ago, we in the Raj Bhavan organized a **Painting Competition for a Cause**. It was to save energy. We can get our children involved in such useful programmes where they use their imagination and creativity.

I am happy that the Catholic schools in Manipur have been centres of excellence in the field of education, producing quality students. The people of the state repose great faith in the Catholic Schools and there is high demand for admission in these institutions. The contributions of the Catholic Schools in the state are unique and unparalleled and they are marching forward with a grand vision of the future. It is indeed laudable that the Archbishop of Imphal is heading a number of prominent educational institutions such as three Colleges, nine Higher Secondary Schools, forty-one High Schools and fourteen Junior Schools in the state. There is an impressive number of sixty-four thousand four hundred forty-eight students studying in Catholic Schools in Manipur.

Let us join our hands together and take a pledge to secure the present and future of the country’s budding leaders to make a beautiful nation and I wish all the children a bright future. With these words, I thank the organisers for inviting me to this memorable occasion.

Jai Hind.