

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE XXIV JUNIOR NATIONAL FENCING CHAMPIONSHIP ON 15TH NOVEMBER, 2016 AT THE INDOOR STADIUM, KHUMAN LAMPAK, IMPHAL.

Shri I. Hemochandra Singh, Hon'ble Minister (Forest & Environment),
Shri Th. Joykumar Singh, Vice-President, Fencing Association of India,
Shri Shiv Kumar Parasher, Vice-President, Fencing Association of India,
Shri Ashok Dudare, Secretary General, Fencing Association of India,
Distinguished Invitees,
Friends from Media,
All Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad and no less excited to be with you all, specially with the young fencers from different parts of the country and our own host state on the occasion of the Closing Ceremony of 24th Junior National Fencing Championship, 2016. My heartiest greetings to the organisers, participants and all others present here at this function.

As you are aware, Fencing which was once only for combat purposes, is now a modern competitive sport worldwide. It is a thrilling sport which requires a lot of skill, agility and presence of mind. Fencing was first introduced during the 1896 Olympics and included in every Olympic Competition since then. Subsequently, Women's fencing first appeared in the Olympics in 1924. Men and women compete in both team and individual events in Olympics. It is a sport based on simple but strong values such as self-control, discipline and will power.

The game of fencing is now gaining popularity in our country and in Manipur too with the initiative of Manipur Fencing Association founded in 1976, affiliated to Manipur Olympic Association and Fencing Association of India. Manipuris are having inborn qualities of swordsmanship which makes

them excellent material to become world-class fencers. From the time of their forefathers, the Manipuris are playing Thang-Ta (Sword-Spear), one of the martial arts of Manipur. The Manipuri Thang-Ta is replete with unique forms of defensive and offensive fights naturally evolved against the warlike background of the ancient kingdom. Manipuri martial arts still remain a part and parcel of Manipuri life and culture. Most of the fencers from Manipur have knowledge of Thang-Ta. I also know that in every National Games held in the country, Manipuri Fencers display their superiority by winning Gold, Silver and Bronze Medals which is a highly remarkable achievement. In other words, Manipur has produced a good number of fencers and they have brought prestigious medals in a number of national and international competitions or championships. Fencing has contributed in a big way to Manipur earning the accolade 'powerhouse of sports'. I hope that the efforts of the Manipur Fencing Association will go a long way towards further popularisation of the discipline of fencing in the state and also in producing increasing number of State Fencers for the national and international arena.

Those who have come from other states may feel they have travelled long and far to participate in this tournament. But it may be remembered that sportspersons of Manipur have travelled such distances every year to other states to participate in the sports tournaments. I would personally like more number of national level tournaments in different disciplines to be held in Manipur every year. This will make the players of mainland India know more about Manipur in particular and the north-east in general. Such intermingling also will bring better understanding between the various communities in the country.

We all are well aware that games and sports play an important role in moulding the character of the youth and in building the strength of a nation. They also promote discipline, fellow feeling and social harmony, which are what Manipur and the whole country truly need today. I am told that the

tournament has been a huge success with 403 players from 26 states testing their fencing skills against each other. I am sure the 24th Junior National Fencing Championship, 2016 has provided a good opportunity for healthy competition and also has generated bonhomie, team spirit and sportsmanship among the participants, strengthening the bonds of friendship and brotherhood among the various peoples in the country. It is also in this spirit of healthy competition that the winners and losers share the honour and pride. I am sure this tournament has made the participants coming from different parts of the country including Manipur better players for bringing laurels to the country in future.

I congratulate all the award winners in the tournament. The other players who were unable to obtain the awards need not be disheartened as active participation in a field of competition itself is, indeed, a substantial win. We cannot always win but we shall never be bad losers and people will always have the maximum respect for us. Fencing is not only a sport, it is a way to see life with a different eye. It gives you the possibility to show your abilities, your bravery and your decision during a fight. It inculcates the spirit of love amongst the youth of the country and contributes to the building of their physical and mental fibre.

I hope, my dear young Fencers from other parts of India have had a pleasant stay in the state and visited and enjoyed the scenic areas of Manipur to take back happy and sweet memories.

With these words, I thank the organizers for inviting me to this function.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.