

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF MEDIA WORKSHOP ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND ADAPTATION ISSUES IN THE INDIAN HIMALAYAS ON 3RD DECEMBER, 2016 AT HOTEL IMPHAL, IMPHAL.

Shri I. Hemochandra Singh ji, Hon'ble Minister (Forest & Environment),
Ms. P.N. Vasanti, Director General, Centre for Media Studies,
Shri Shirish Sinha, Deputy Director, Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation,
Friends from the Media,
Distinguished Invitees,
All the participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be with you all at this inaugural function of Media Workshop on Climate Change and Adaptation Issues in the Indian Himalayas. The topic of climate change has assumed great significance and contemporary relevance in view of the fast changing climatic conditions in the region. And the presence of several prominent journalists today has definitely given fresh impetus to the deliberations on climate change. My best wishes to all of you. I have also been given to understand that this is the second such workshop and the first one was held in Almora in the first week of November. I am very hopeful that the series of workshops will be able to disseminate the message of the alarming climate change and the remedies we have to look for.

Climate change is a reality today all over the world. The average global temperature has been rising, so also global ocean temperature and the sea surface temperature. At the same time, there has been a decline in the Arctic sea ice coverage. All these evidences go to show that climate change is indeed occurring and at a rapid pace. Occurrence of extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, heat waves, extreme rainfall and droughts with greater frequency and with more intensity are also manifestations of climate change as was tsunami.

The Himalayas have a very fragile eco-system. For centuries, this eco-system has remained delicately balanced and has been responsible for the tremendous bio-diversity of the Himalayas. However, the Himalayas have undergone major changes in the last century. Conditions range from a critical situation in the Himalayas of Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Kashmir to a moderately serious situation in Bhutan and the eastern Himalayas. The impact of over-exploitation of natural resources has increasingly led to reduced dense forest cover, accelerated soil erosion, increased silting of water bodies, drying-up of springs and the disappearance of many species of flora and fauna. Besides this, it has also increased the ratio of energy expended on fodder, fuel collection and agricultural activity. Economic changes, an increase in population and urbanization, unregulated tourism, the building of communication lines into the remotest reaches have further taken their toll on this region leading to acute climate changes.

The Himalayas are warming up at a rate faster than the global average. Changes in temperature and precipitation in the region will have serious and far-reaching consequences on several sectors which are dependent on climate, mainly agriculture and water resources. We must remember that Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy of the people in the Himalayan region. Measures need to be taken to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions which are causing long term changes in climate. At the same time, we need to prepare people and communities in vulnerable areas to adapt to climate change.

Manipur like other states in the region is an agrarian state with a bulk of its population depending upon agriculture as main source of livelihood. Therefore, any impact of climate change on agricultural productivity will directly affect communities and people of the state. As a matter of fact, there is virtually an environmental crisis in the state. Because of rapid denudation of forests, it is estimated that the rate of soil erosion is much more here. Average temperature is on the increase and rainfall has been badly affected. The state has started having long spells of water scarcity now. Take the case of Lamphelpat and many such pats or lakes which were once wetlands. They

are now all converted to dry land. Because of all these, there is the spectre of a drastic climate makeover looming large. The flora and fauna of the state will also be most vulnerable to these changes.

Though, scientists have also been working on different aspects of climate change, State Governments also are preparing plans for adaptation and action groups on the ground are engaged in implementing projects, there is a greater need for generating awareness and motivating communities at the local level. Here, media can play a vital role highlighting the issues like depletion of wild-life and plant species, melting of glaciers, changes in cropping patterns and occurrence of extreme weather events, etc. I hope media persons, both in print and electronic, will focus more on impact of climate change in remote vulnerable communities. They should also highlight case studies of success at local level which do not find much space or not adequately covered.

At this critical juncture with the impending danger, the role played by Centre for Media Studies and Indian Himalayas Climate Adaptation Programme is indeed praiseworthy. The workshop will enable the participants for a better appreciation of the calamitous consequence of climate change and the need for building awareness to arrest such catastrophic changes. Here, I sincerely hope that the workshop will serve as a platform for a meaningful deliberation and come out with suggestions to prevent the deteriorating situation of climate change in the world.

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

Thank you,

Jai Hind.