

SPEECH OF THE HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR, DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA AS CHIEF GUEST AT THE FOUNDATION DAY FUNCTION OF THE ALL MANIPUR BAR ASSOCIATION ON 15<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2016 AT CHEIRAP COURT COMPLEX, IMPHAL

Shri I. Hemochandra Singh, Hon'ble Minister, Law & Legislative Affairs,  
Shri Th. Ibohal Singh, Advocate General,  
Shri N. Ibotombi Singh, Senior Advocate, Chairman, Bar Council,  
Shri Kh. Binoykumar Singh, Senior Advocate, President, High Court Bar Association,  
Shri H. Chandrajit Sharma, Senior Advocate, President, All Manipur Bar Association,  
Members of the Bar,  
Friends from the Media,  
Distinguished Invitees,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am privileged to be here today amongst you on the occasion of the 65<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day Celebration of the All Manipur Bar Association. I extend a very warm greeting to you all on this occasion. It is very comforting to see such a vibrant Bar in front of me and I feel reassured that one of the three pillars of Democracy is thriving in our country.

The Foundation Day always remains a significant event for an establishment and it is an occasion not only for celebration but for introspection also. It provides an opportunity to all concerned to reflect on the activities of the past and to explore the ways and means for overcoming the new challenges and move forward.

Manipur is not new to the working of a judicial system for dispensation of justice. Under its Kings in the past, the state already had a well organised justice delivery system. The early judicial system of the state was both methodical and significant. There were two Chief Courts, the 'Cheirap' and the 'Garot' which was known as the Military Court. There was also a court for the trial of cases in which women were involved and other minor courts for cattle dispute and other such cases.

The present systematic representation of lawyers in the administration of justice started in Manipur around the year, 1947 when the British left the Indian sub-continent. Manipur also gained freedom from the British yoke and along with the enactment of the Manipur

Constitution Act, 1947, a Chief Court was established. The Chief Court introduced system of issuing Pleader's License to educated persons even though they were not law graduates. These license holders could practice law before the law courts. The Chief Court issued Pleader Licences during the years, 1947 to 1950 to some persons and these persons formed themselves into an association. Thus, on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of September, 1951, the Manipur Bar Association came into existence. Gradually, the number of members of the Association and its activities increased day by day. The Manipur Bar Association was renamed as the All Manipur Bar Association in the year, 1993 and now it has a total membership of more than one thousand and seven hundred members on its roll. Manipur is considered as a frontrunner in the field of women empowerment and it is heartening that women have not lagged behind in the field of justice delivery. Enrolment of women members in the Manipur Bar Association started in the year, 1970 and as on date more than 300 women are already enrolled as members of the Association.

As you are all aware, the edifice of Democracy in the country rests on three pillars – Legislature, Judiciary and Executive. The essence of true democracy lies where these three pillars are well-balanced. They have definitive roles to play, complementary to each other, under the sacrosanct guidelines of the Indian Constitution. The fathers of our Constitution in the Constituent Assembly had the vision and wisdom for a vibrant democracy in the country with the three pillars in complete harmony. The democratic system in the country is likely to suffer from aberration if the three pillars act discordantly. It is an established fact that a robust judicial system is a prerequisite for democracy to flourish and the role of the Bar in such a system is paramount. A vibrant Bar enables the judiciary, also called the guardian of law, to attain effective justice delivery. I have spent 36 years of my life with democratic institutions while in protecting democracy also keeping in mind the importance of judiciary. Parliaments make the law which are acted upon by judiciary and interpreted by lawyers. The world today is well-informed and the citizens are very conscious of their rights and duties under the law. Further, it is an age where accessibility to justice is of prime consideration and 'justice at your doorstep' is a priority area for both the Central and State Governments. The responsibility of the members of the Bar, that is, the lawyer fraternity in such a scenario has become more challenging. The members of the Bar have to remain ever ready for dispensation of justice in a truthful and efficient manner and should remain ever vigilant to prevent any miscarriage of justice.

Further, free legal service to the people is one area which I would urge you to give due importance. Legal fees are increasing day by day and a large number of our poor people cannot afford to pay for the legal services. In such a scenario, legal justice is beyond their reach. We need to strengthen our free legal service system and the lawyers should come forward with a certain amount of dedication and sacrifice.

Another issue that has disturbed me much is the large number of pending cases waiting disposal. We often read about this in the newspapers. We should make a concerted effort to improve the situation. As the dictum says, 'Justice delayed is justice denied'. Delivering justice timely should be given the importance it deserves.

I had addressed the 40<sup>th</sup> Session of the Asian-African Legal Consultative Committee (the headquarters in Delhi) meeting held at New Delhi on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2001 where I had touched upon certain topics of contemporary relevance to the legal practitioners. With the advancement of technology, use of computers, e-mails and internet is increasing today at break-neck pace and so is the occurrence of cyber crimes. Members of the Bar in the state should also be ready to engage this complex and daunting challenge. Another point I had raised was the growing ambit and applicability of International Law. Manipur being a border state having long international boundary with Myanmar, the state would be having issues involving international law such as International Environmental Law and International Criminal Law sooner or later. Globalization also created new areas of conflict in the form of patent laws and intellectual property rights. The legal fraternity should also consider settlement out of courts for it. Abstraction is most important both for national and interstate and internal level which can help in reducing the large number of cases in the courts. Here again, I would encourage concrete capacity building initiatives in International Law by organising specialized training programmes, workshops and seminars.

The All Manipur Bar Association has had a glorious existence of 65 years and many of its members have excelled in their chosen field. A considerable number of members of the Bar have been designated as Senior Advocates. A total of five members have been elevated to Judges of the High court till date, a coveted and prestigious position. Apart from those in the judiciary, three members of the Bar have turned law makers as Chief Ministers and a number of members again as Ministers from time to time. I am hopeful that the members of the Bar will continue to

work with all sincerity and deliver to the citizens legal services of the highest order. I am with you in all your endeavour for a quality judicial system in the state.

I thank the organisers for inviting me to this function.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.