

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> MANIPUR STATEHOOD DAY WOMEN'S POLO TOURNAMENT, 2018 ON 21/01/2018 AT MAPAL KANGJEIBUNG, IMPHAL.

Dr. Sapam Ranjan, Hon'ble MLA and Chairman, Tourism Corporation of Manipur Ltd.,

Dr. K. Saratchandra Singh, President, All Manipur Polo Association,

Shri P.K. Singh, Principal Secretary (Tourism),

Participants from different countries and states,

Friends from Electronic and Print Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

KHURUMJARI,

I am happy to be here amongst you at the Closing Function of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Manipur Statehood Day Women's Polo Tournament. I consider it my good fortune to be a part of this all Women's Polo Tournament and what is doubly exhilarating and awe inspiring is that the game is being played at Mapal Kangjeibung which is considered the oldest living polo ground in the world.

Manipur is well-known as the birthplace of the game of polo. It had its origin in the traditional Manipuri Polo – 'Sagol Kangjei' and the game has evolved from the traditional to the modern form of Polo over the years. Polo or Sagol Kangjei as played in Manipur those days had its own rules known as Kangjeirol. These rules have undergone drastic changes since then and the game is now played under the IPA rules. The Manipur Polo International Tournament first organised in the year, 1991 is a men's polo tournament approved by the Indian Polo Association and the only one of its kind played on pony. The tournament is organised every year as a part of the Manipur Sangai Festival and whereas, the present women's tournament is the pioneering showcase of International Women's Polo which goes to establish Manipur as India's centre for women's polo.

This Women's Polo Tournament is also a flagship event of Manipur Tourism aimed at promoting the state as a preferred destination for polo tourism in the world. The tournament is organised in co-ordination with the All Manipur Polo Association and Huntre! Equine. It has been made a calendar event, held every year from 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> January and this edition has added significance as the tournament commemorates Manipur's 47 years of statehood. It is very heartening that the current edition of the Tournament is featuring women's polo teams from four continents. Women polo teams from Manipur representing India and other international teams from Australia, Kenya and USA are playing at this league tournament. The polo enthusiasts have come to this remote part of the world by their love and passion for the game. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has extended travel support to all the international teams and I am thankful to the Hon'ble Union Minister of Tourism (I/C) Shri K.J. Alphons for such a help at our request.

Manipur has given Polo to the world and it is definitely a matter of pride for everyone in the state. But it is also a sad fact that the game is suffering from a serious growth deficit. The reasons could be many ranging from lack of sponsorship, high cost to competition posed by modern games. This has also caused dwindling of the number of original ponies in the state. This tournament is part of Manipur Tourism's campaign to save the unique and endangered Manipuri pony alongwith popularizing the game of Polo in its birth place. The polo pony of Manipur, a recognized breed of India, though small, is sturdy and agile. These ponies are even now, literally semi-wild and there is tremendous pressure on them as the traditional grazing ground has shrunk. Renewed efforts need to be made to save this breed from extinction. I hope this tournament will help in highlighting this issue and lead to a more concerted effort to save the animal.

The tournament has been a grand success like its earlier editions and I am hopeful that all the players especially our friends from abroad will go

back with pleasant memories of playing polo at its birthplace. I am also confident that future editions of the tournament will see more participation from different parts of the world. My compliments to the organizers and all the players especially the winners. I would also like to convey my good wishes to all. I thank the organizers for inviting me to this function.

Thank you.

THAGATCHARI.

Jai Hind.