

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE EXHIBITION CUM CONFERENCE 'EMERGING NORTH EAST, 2018' ON 4TH MARCH, 2018 AT NEZCC, GUWAHATI, ASSAM

Smt. Bijoya Chakravarty ji, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha,

Shri D.S. Rawat ji, Secretary General, ASSOCHAM,

Shri S.N. Nundy ji, Co-Chairman, ASSOCHAM Eastern Region Committee,

Other dignitaries on the dais,

All distinguished Invitees,

Friends from Media,

All Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be associated with such an important function pertaining to the North-East, organized by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India in collaboration with the Ministries of Food Processing Industries, DoNER, Tourism and Skill Development under the theme: "Emerging North East, 2018". At the very outset, I would like to congratulate the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India for taking the lead in organizing such a mega event in furtherance of a shared vision for the sustained development of North-East Region.

I am given to understand that in addition to the State Governments from North Eastern Region, several Ministries, Public Sector Undertakings, Banks, Industries are extending their support and several key stakeholders from Industry, Institutions, Embassies, Experts, Investors and the Government officials are also participating in this mega event. More importantly, over ten thousand farmers, youths, women groups, entrepreneurs and rural functionaries from all the eight North Eastern States are also participating in this event. It augurs well for the initiative and I extend my heartiest congratulations to all of you.

In recent years trade fairs, conferences, business events, economic forums and exhibitions have become very effective platforms for promoting or conducting business on a national and international scale. They provide an excellent opportunity to assess views from clients and determine market potential, conduct research and evaluate competition, develop commercial structures by identifying new agents and distributors and initiating joint ventures, tie-ups, project partnerships and also help in boosting investment prospects. Exhibitions help in promotion, marketing and publicity efforts of participating enterprises especially Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises to a great extent as the micro and small enterprises find it difficult to give adequate publicity to their products in the media due to various constraints, the biggest being financial. Such events also act as a platform for all the potential buyers wherein they have an access to the entire gamut of products and technologies. Not long ago, I had the opportunity of attending the 1st North-East Development Summit on 21st November, 2017 and its follow-up the 3rd Annual Convention between North Eastern region of India and ASEAN countries on 23rd February, 2018 both held at Imphal in pursuit of similar objectives for the N.E. region. The experience was very encouraging.

As you are all well aware, North-East India is becoming a key region for private investment which seeks to harness the massive economic potential of the northeast. The North-East region possesses an ocean of opportunity, resources and unexplored potential in the field of agriculture. The region also produces huge marketable surplus in a number of perishable commodities such as banana, pine-apple, orange and tomato. It is a well-known fact that a significant proportion of agriculture produce gets wasted during transition from place of production to consumption as well as during storage. One solution is the food processing sector and the region holds a lot of potential for food processing as the natural attributes including weather are conducive. It has vast untapped potential in natural resources such as oil and natural gas,

minerals, forest products and hydel power. The region also possesses several comparative advantages like fertile soils, favourable climatic conditions, rich bio-diversity, forest wealth and educated manpower. The region is seen as an emerging, if challenging, consumer market with well established mobile telephone and internet providers and wide scope for automobile, retail, hospitality, airline and information technology industries. Having geographically strategic location at the junction of southeast Asian countries and China with 90% of the area bordered by countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, China and Nepal, there is a whole new world of business for private investment in India's northeast frontier.

Being the Governor of Manipur in the eastern most corner of North-East India, I would like to flag a few areas of potential and opportunities pertaining to the state. Manipur is rich in bio-diversity, within the top ten in the world and a wealth of flora and fauna. Its breathtaking scenic beauty makes it a tourist's paradise and the state has vast tourism potential for becoming a tourism hub. Distinct historical, cultural and ethnic heritage add to the charm. Manipur has the advantage of acting as India's "Gateway to the East" through Moreh town, which is the only feasible land route for trade between India and Myanmar and other South East Asian countries. Under the Act East Policy of the Central Government and opening of the Trans-Asian highways, a whole lot of business avenues have opened with the ASEAN countries through Manipur. Endeavour is also for reviving the old cultural ties with these countries. In the field of handloom and handicraft, Manipur has the highest number of handicrafts units as well as the highest number of craft persons comprising skilled and semi-skilled artisans in the entire North Eastern Region. Handloom is the largest cottage industry in Manipur and the state ranks among the top five in terms of the number of looms in the country. Manipur is also the first state in India to have set up the 4-core infrastructure of the National e-Governance Plan, namely Common Service

Centre, State-Wide Area Network, state Data Centre and State Portal, State Service Delivery Gateway and e-forms.

Entrepreneurship is another vital part which is not only about setting up one's own enterprises but also giving employment to many people, thereby contributing significantly to the growth and development of the country. Considering constraints at the Government level on providing jobs to all, self-employment must be promoted. Instead of job seekers one should be encouraged to become job providers. It is strongly believed that the MSME sector is the nursery of entrepreneurship, often driven by individual creativity and innovation. I, therefore, encourage MSMEs to look at themselves as not only producers but also innovators. The MSME sector is characterized by low investment requirement, operational flexibility and location wise mobility. I have prepared a plan of livelihood mission of Skill Development in Manipur. The State Government has approved the plan and with the help of the Union Skill Development Ministry, we are planning to train young people in various areas like tourism, hospitality, sports, textiles, pottery, cane and bamboo crafts, stone carving, block printing, hand embroidery, tribal arts and crafts and others very soon. We are going to launch the programme and it is our earnest desire to train thousands of youths in one year which is quite possible. During my term as Union Minister of Minority Affairs, I did the same for the youths belonging to minority communities and in two years trained thousands of youths all over the country. I am hopeful that we can achieve these targets in Manipur also.

It is highly heartening that apart from providing an opportunity for the N.E. Region to showcase its economic potential, the conference is also aimed at providing opportunity to engage with other Government agencies, Embassies of various countries and investors to enhance the growth of the region and its neighbourhood which will contribute significantly to the development of the entire North-East Region. I am also hopeful that the big

business houses in the country will widen their engagement with the North-East under their CSR programme.

My special thanks to the Government of Assam for hosting this mega event and I am fully confident that the deliberations in this event will go a long way in providing a definitive direction to the development of the region.

In the end, I would also like to emphasize that all stakeholders must work together for promotion and development of this important segment of the country's economy. I wish the event "Emerging North East, 2018" a grand success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.