

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE LAUNCH OF DIGITAL LITERACY AND ONLINE SAFETY PROGRAMME FOR THE WOMEN OF NORTH EAST ON 5TH DECEMBER, 2018 AT IMPHAL HOTEL, IMPHAL

Shri Th. Radheshyam Singh ji, Hon'ble Minister, Education,
Ms. Nemcha Kipgen ji, Hon'ble Minister, Social Welfare,
Smt. Rekha Sharma ji, Chairperson, National Commission for Women,
Other dignitaries on the Dais,
Members from the Media,
Distinguished Invitees,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be associated with the launch of the Digital Literacy Programme for women of the North East. It is a collaborative effort between the National Commission for Women and Facebook along with Cyber Peace Foundation. The organizers deserve appreciation for taking such an important initiative which is of great contemporary relevance to womenfolk of the North East.

The Central Government recently launched the Digital Northeast Vision Document, 2022 in Guwahati on 18th August, 2018 with an objective of improving digital connectivity and infusing digital literacy in the North East in tandem with other States of the country. The Central Government's flagship programme 'Digital India' has now newly incorporated the North-East Region into it. It was in the year, 2015 that the Digital India was first launched by the Centre and now the North Eastern Region has made it in the programme. The main objective of the 'Digital Northeast India Vision 2022' is to utilize the information and communication technology to lead the youth of the region to a better and developed future. With the launching of this Digital Literacy programme for the women of the North East, the Digital North East Vision of the Central Government will be given more focus.

I am, indeed, pleased to know that as a part of the pilot project under Digital Literacy Programme over a one year period, awareness training will be conducted for sixty thousand women in universities across major cities of Haryana, Delhi, NCR, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Manipur, Meghalaya and Sikkim on safe and responsible use of internet, social media and e-mail. This will enable the trainees to differentiate between credible and questionable information circulated digitally. Internet has come to stay in the modern society and it is playing a role in our everyday lives like no other technology ever. On the positive side, it has given people opportunity to connect and stay connected with people, explore professional skilling and grooming, share information and participate in the global race for development. When such an Internet tsunami is engaging people both men and women all over the world, it also crucial for everyone to be aware about safety practices, basic security and privacy tools.

As you all are aware, the number of women using the Internet are very few in India owing to the lack of digital awareness and literacy about different platforms, their potential and opportunities for a smart usage. Having said that, there are also women today running successful cosmetic product businesses through social media from their homes, women self-help groups selling local village produce on E-Commerce platforms and homemakers showcasing their food delicacies on YouTube. Women have launched great start-ups online and are pioneering some very successful ones having worked on technology, offering solutions to modern day problems of the people.

In India, we need to solve the problem of lack of inclusion of women in the Internet using population through technology capacitation and it is encouraging that the rate of inclusion is fast catching up. Along with access to devices and technology, women also need to be aware about how to use them. I am told that the present initiative of National Commission for Women

has already reached out to close to twelve thousand women across the country and it is very heart-warming to hear stories of women who have benefitted from a campaign such as this. The campaign has not only sensitized women and built capacity among them about navigating the internet space but has also empowered them to protect themselves and actively respond to issues and incidents like cyber crimes. The women of the North East and Manipur in particular are very talented and they deserve to be sufficiently empowered with the digital technology for a space in this highly competitive world.

I cannot emphasise enough how important it is for me, personally, that we bring this digital technology to the women of Manipur and I am very grateful to everyone who has taken the time and trouble to come to Manipur for this launching event as we can take this programme as a part of women empowerment. The women of this State should not be left behind and should be given a level playing field to join the national mainstream.

Thank you again National Commission for Women, Facebook and the Cyber Peace Foundation for inviting me and I wish the programme all success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.