

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE 'HUN FESTIVAL-2018' ON 7TH APRIL, 2018 AT KHEITHELMANBI MILITARY COLONY, KANGPOKPI DISTRICT

Shri V. Hangkhanlian, Hon'ble Minister (Agriculture),
Smt. Nemcha Kipgen, Hon'ble Minister (Social Welfare),
Shri Ginsuanhao, Hon'ble MLA, Singhat Assembly Constituency,
Members of the Organizing Committee,
Leaders from different communities,
Members of the Media,
Distinguished Invitees,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here to participate in HUN-2018, an important Cultural Festival of our Thadou brethren, a very joyous and auspicious occasion. The festival is celebrated on 7th April every year and marks the occasion for Thanksgiving Prayer on the sprouting of plants and for a bountiful harvest. The HUN festival, therefore, has come to mean an important village agricultural activity.

The Thadou forms a large community in the state and their contribution to the integrity of the state has been immense. They fought bravely in the freedom struggle of India and the Anglo-Kuki War during 1917 to 1919 stands testimony to their bravery and love for freedom. Though they were far outmatched by the superior British forces, they stood their ground with their undying spirit. These brave sons will be remembered and revered for generations to come.

The Thadou tribe has a rich cultural heritage with their own unique and multifaceted traditions well reflected also in this festival. 'HUN' is held during spring and this festival provides an opportunity to not only make merry but to introspect on our past and plan for the future. It is representative of the way of life of the Thadou people down the ages and remains an integral part of their cultural identity.

I am hopeful that the celebration of 'HUN' this year will not only help in promoting collective identity of our Thadou brethren but will spread the

message of peace, love, communal harmony, friendship and brotherhood amongst the different communities in the North-east and especially in Manipur. Manipur as everyone knows is beset with problems of different hues and rifts are being created by vested interests between communities. These divisive forces are posing a great challenge to the age-old tradition of peaceful co-existence. We should guard ourselves against those who are working against our common interests. If peace does not prevail, then the growth curve is stymied, even though the state has huge potential. With increase in population, pressure on land is bound to increase thereby creating new conflicts. We have seen this in the past not only in Manipur but elsewhere also and this will rear its ugly head in the future too.

We, the citizens of Manipur as responsible people should ensure that we settle our differences through talks and negotiations and not resort to violence, including bandhs and blockades. Let us set aside our differences and resolve not to resort to bandhs and blockades as such aberrations severely affect the poorer section of the society. Let us cast aside our self-centered egos and policies and work for the overall welfare of the state. 'HUN' is an opportunity for reaffirming such a stand as this festival exemplifies gratefulness, compassion and gaiety. Emotional integration cannot be achieved in a single day but a start needs to be made so that we can build on it. Let this traditional festival spread the message of peaceful co-existence for a better Manipur.

I am very impressed to witness various cultural programmes staged by various cultural troupes to mark this auspicious occasion. I also express my appreciation for the rich display of Thadou cultural traditions and I am sure today's function will go a long way in promoting and perpetuating these social assets.

I thank the organisers for inviting me to this HUN Festival-2018 celebration and wish you all a happy celebration.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.