

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF HEIKRU-HIDONGBA FESTIVAL, 2018 ON 20TH SEPTEMBER, 2018 AT BIJOY GOVINDA THANGAPAT, SAGOLBAND, IMPHAL

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

Shri R.K. Imo Singh ji, Hon'ble MLA,

Members of the Bijoy Govinda Sevayet Committee,

The Participating Teams,

Members of the Print and Electronic Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be with you today to celebrate the 240th Heikru-Hidongba or the boat race festival at the Moat of Shri Shri Bijoygovinda. As many of you would be aware, this is the second time I am attending the festival starting from last year as Governor of the State. This festival is observed by the Meitei society on the eleventh day of the fortnight of Langban month or September of the Meitei calendar every year. It is considered an important and joyous festival and has been observed for years at the Moat or Thangapat of Shri Shri Bijoy Govindajee Temple. Seeing the significance of the festival in the life of the people, I decided to institute the Governor's Trophy for the Boat Race.

Heikru-Hidongba is a socio-religious ceremony performed every year and as per the royal chronicle, Heikru-Hidongba festival is celebrated with the famous offering of Heikru or Amalaki fruit to the Lord on the 11th day of Langban month accompanied with an exciting contest of 'Hiyang Tanaba' or Boat Race in the sacred Thangapat Moat of Sagolband, Bijoy Govinda. This festival is not a mere visual festivity but a festival accompanied with the old folklore tradition and culture of the Meiteis and reviving of those age-old tradition in the form of a festival. This Heikru-Hidongba festival was

introduced by the renowned Mantri Ananda Shai with the grace and favour of the State ruler Bhagyachandra Maharaj in the middle of the 18th century AD after the installation of Lord Bijoy Govinda and Lord Shri Govinda. Heikru-Hidongba puja is dedicated only to Lord Bijoy Govinda under the sole management of the descendants of the pious ancient Mantri in co-operation with the local citizens.

As we all know, Heikru-Hidongba is an anniversary ceremony performed in the shape of worship and game to commemorate the mysterious way of victory by our heroic fore-fathers over the invincible hordes of foreign aggressors through the mercy of the Lord. History tells how this small kingdom had been overrun and ransacked by the relentless swarms of Burmese aggressors and invaders; how our kinsmen had been ruthlessly massacred and tortured by the foreign aggressors during the ancient days and how the noble hearted King Bhagyachandra could avail of the timely friendship with the Ahom king and how he could collect and call up his own people under the advice and command of his venerable Royal Uncle, Mantri Ananda Shai.

History also tells us how Lord Shri Govinda came at the critical moment to the rescue of the king and his people, how the king glorified mercy of the Lord by installing Lord's own images in his kingdom, how the great grand Mantri had been rewarded and honoured by the pious and upright king and his loyal subjects. Heikru-Hidongba festival, therefore, is celebrated based on this historical truth. It is also a ceremony to signify the symbol of unity that was once deeply rooted amongst our heroic and loyal forefathers in their struggles for the nation's peace and freedom. It has also a great meaning in the field of moral science and political philosophy. The more we observe and study this public function, the more we will learn about the heart and soul of our ancestors who sacrificed their most precious lives without the least grumbling for peace and freedom of our people.

Therefore, let us move onward with the Lord within your heart and the footprints of your ancestors in your front. This is the greatest moral teaching or lesson that we may actually learn from our Heikru-Hidongba ceremony held every year. I do not intend to take much of your time as the gathering here today must be eagerly waiting to witness the exciting boat race which is taking place in a few minutes from now.

With these few words, I thank the Organising Committee for inviting me to this festival.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.