

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF THE 5TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HIGH COURT OF MANIPUR ON 23RD MARCH, 2018 AT THE AUDITORIUM OF THE HIGH COURT OF MANIPUR, IMPHAL

Hon'ble Acting Chief Justice, N. Kotiswar Singh ji,

Hon'ble Judge, Kh. Nobin Singh ji,

Other dignitaries on the dais,

All the invitees,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my privilege to be with you all here to celebrate one month long 5th Anniversary of the Manipur High Court. I am happy to be in the company of the Learned Judges of the Manipur High Court as well as the Judges of Subordinate Courts of the state and distinguished lawyers and officers of Manipur Judicial Service who form an important cog of Indian democracy.

On this momentous day of reaching the milestone of 5th Anniversary, I would like to put on record my appreciation of all those who played a role in bringing a full-fledged High Court to Manipur. The High Court of Manipur was established five years ago and it was the realisation of a long cherished dream of the people of the state. You all know that earlier only a Bench of the Gauhati High Court was functioning at Imphal and the people of the state had to contend with various bottlenecks in seeking justice from the higher courts and it even remained beyond the reach of the common man. After its establishment, the High Court of Manipur has been rendering remarkable service in the justice delivery system of the state and disposal of cases has become faster with easier access of the people to the higher courts. Much advancement has also been made since going on-line. The eCourts Integrated

Mission Mode Project is one of the national governance projects being implemented in the High Court as well as District and Subordinate Courts.

However, in the midst of rejoicing and celebration, the occasion also calls for introspection. I have always maintained that an independent judiciary is a national asset and very much essential for a modern society. It must be competent and impartial. It is well-known that the rule of law sustains democracy and it is equally true that to a bold and independent judiciary is assigned the stupendous task of maintaining rule of law. The framers of the Indian Constitution at the time of framing of our Constitution were concerned about the kind of judiciary our country should have for achieving a smooth justice delivery system. Most people say they believe in the rule of law, yet few can define it coherently. High rule of law scores are the unique biggest contributors to national prosperity, peace, liberty and freedom from corruption. Virtually nothing is more important for us to understand and uphold than the rule of law. The rule of law should be a living reality properly understood by ordinary people. It is constitutionally more important than is generally realized.

As you are all aware, the edifice of Democracy in the country rests on three pillars – Legislature, Judiciary and Executive. The essence of true democracy lies where these three pillars are well-balanced. They have definite roles to play, complementary to each other, under the sacrosanct guidelines of the Indian Constitution. The fathers of our Constitution in the Constituent Assembly had the vision and wisdom for a vibrant democracy in the country with the three pillars in complete harmony. It is an established fact that a robust judicial system is a prerequisite for democracy to flourish. I have spent 36 years of my life with democratic institutions, both National and International level and while protecting democracy I have also kept in mind the importance of judiciary. Parliaments and Legislatures make the law and the judiciary is its guardian. The world today is well-informed and the

citizens are very conscious of their rights and duties under the law. Further, it is an age where accessibility to justice is of prime consideration and ‘justice at your doorstep’ is a priority area for both the Central and State Governments.

An issue that has disturbed me much is the large number of pending cases waiting disposal. We often read about this in the newspapers. We should make a concerted effort to improve the situation. As the dictum says, ‘Justice delayed is justice denied’. Delivering justice timely should be given the importance it deserves. I am aware that the High Court of Manipur is making rapid strides in the disposal of cases since its inception. Fast track courts are also helping in lessening the burden and speedy delivery of justice. It is a fact that functioning of the Court has been hobbled by the chronic shortage of judges. This has often constrained the public to approach the highest court of the land in search of suitable Bench or resulted in denial of legal remedy to those who lack the means. It is unfortunate that out of a sanctioned strength of five judges there are only two judges at present. I am actively pursuing this issue with the Central Government so that at least three judges are in position at any point of time.

I am confident that the High Court of Manipur will continue to dispense with justice of the highest order and will achieve even greater heights as a Temple of Justice. I am with you in your entire endeavour for a quality judicial system in the state.

I thank the organisers for inviting me to this function.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.