

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE LAUNCHING OF A GLOBAL CAMPAIGN ON BIODIVERSITY FOR EVERYONE'S LIFE ON 17TH SEPTEMBER, 2018 AT HOTEL CLASSIC GRANDE, IMPHAL.

Shri Y. Khemchand Singh ji, Hon'ble Speaker, Manipur Legislative Assembly,

Prof. Dinabandhu Sahoo, Director, IBSD,

All the participating delegates,

Members from Print and Electronic Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be associated with the launching of a Global campaign on 'Biodiversity for Everyone's Life' organized by IBSD, Imphal. The campaign is of great contemporary significance and I must congratulate the IBSD for taking this initiative. 'Biodiversity' and its indispensability in the very existence of human life on this planet is suddenly attracting the attention of people working in all spheres of life. Also, its criticality today is fully realized by the world.

The forests of today are facing threats due to expansion of population and economic activities. Threat to forests means threat to the wildlife and biodiversity. Biodiversity is the life-blood of the planet and it is vanishing at an alarming rate. All species – large and small – play an important role in shaping and sustaining the Earth as we know it. The concentration and variety of these species is known as biological diversity or simply biodiversity. While biodiversity can be measured empirically, the more forms of life sustained in an area, the more bio-diverse that area is, identifying a singular method for valuing biodiversity proves more elusive.

By its very nature, the intrinsic value of biodiversity cannot be measured, yet is recognized by some as reason enough for its preservation.

For others, biodiversity holds extrinsic value which is reflected in the joy it brings to our lives. An appreciation of the wonder of life and the sense that we are connected to something greater than ourselves can help us appraise the worth of biodiversity.

Meanwhile, a more practical perspective allows us to place a concrete commercial value on biodiversity. Species help ensure clean water and clear skies. They support healthy forests and productive farms by serving as natural predators and pollinators. We frequently look to biodiversity in search of cures to diseases. Biodiversity provides us with tangible, beneficial and irreplaceable products and services, in addition to emotional and spiritual rewards. Whether you care about biodiversity because of the smile it brings to your face or because you value the services it provides, you too play an important role in shaping and sustaining the Earth as we know it. Identify why biodiversity is important to you, become educated on the species and issues that interest you and get involved in protecting what matters to you. Here is the relevancy of today's theme 'Biodiversity for Everyone's Life'.

We also have to get rid of the mistaken notion that complex natural ecosystems, once destroyed at one place can be easily created elsewhere. Such a notion is evident in Government's compensatory afforestation programmes that implicitly assume first that natural ecosystems such as forests can often be created. Policy makers need to distinguish between the planted trees and a natural forest with diversity of species and a myriad of ecological interactions and processes, evolved over millions of years. Indeed, degraded forests can be restored, but the real meaning of 'restoration' seems to have been lost along the way. Even in many of the so-called joint forest management programmes, with regeneration of degraded forests as the main plank, restoration of native forests in many cases has been replaced by planting, often of non-native trees.

Overall, Manipur is blessed with a unique and an enormous amount of biodiversity, finding a place in the first ten biodiversity hotspots in the world. It sustains many of our economic endeavours and provides aesthetic, cultural and spiritual values. This biodiversity is declining, so also our rich flora and fauna and this decline is threatening our survival. We have a special responsibility to document, monitor and conserve our most precious asset. Meeting this responsibility will entail a fundamental shift in the ways we describe, assess changes and conserve biodiversity. I am glad that IBSD is leading from the front in this endeavour.

I would like to appeal to the people to do their bit in safeguarding the forests and biodiversity as the optimum impact on the environment would only be felt by individual intervention. I am also making a small contribution by planting trees in the Raj Bhavan and encouraging others to plant trees in various parts of the State where possible. Let us pledge to conserve forest and preserve nature in its pristine form. Everybody should always remember that ‘Biodiversity for Everyone’s Life’ is the tagline for our survival. I also express my heartfelt gratitude to IBSD for felicitating me on being conferred the Outstanding Parliamentarian Award, 2013.

With these words, I wish IBSD under the able leadership of Prof. Dinabandhu Sahoo all success in their endeavour for conserving ‘Biodiversity’.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.