

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL PROGRAMME OF THE TWO-DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR ON MIGRATION AND ETHNICITY IN NORTH-EAST INDIA ON 23<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY, 2018 AT INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL TRIBAL UNIVERSITY, REGIONAL CAMPUS, MANIPUR, MAKHAN, KANGPOKPI DISTRICT

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Faculty Members of Indira Gandhi National Tribal University,

All the participants,

Friends from the Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be associated with the Inaugural Programme of the 2-Day National Seminar on “Migration and Ethnicity in North-East India” organised by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies in collaboration with the Centre for North-East Studies and Policy Research, Jamia Millia Islamia and Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Regional Campus, Manipur. The Seminar will help in putting into proper context an issue which is hotly debated presently in the North-East.

Today, migration takes place in greater number than ever before and will continue to do so in future. More and more places are simultaneously sending and receiving migrants. Migrants as human beings are an integral part of the human development in a society and country. Migration as ‘factor mobility’ and migrants as ‘factor of production’ are of paramount importance in economics. On the home front, liberalization of India’s economy and the consequent information technology boom in prosperous cities of the country has created new jobs across various sectors. Consequently, a large number of people from all over the country have migrated in search of work towards cities such as Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune and Mumbai. The North-East is also not far behind

in this phenomenon of social mobility and a large number of young people from this region have migrated to different cities.

Migration of young people from the North-East in search of jobs has become more emphatic than before. In addition, a large number of students have been heading for bigger cities for education since a long time. The limited educational and job opportunities in the region are, by far, the most significant 'push' factors while the availability of better educational and job opportunities in bigger cities act as the 'pull' factors. With the exception of students, the majority of the migrant workers are engaged in different service professions. The trend is now more towards the hospitality, industry, BPOS, retail and security services.

People who cannot fulfil the requirements to migrate legally often resort to irregular means. This phenomenon is commonly known as illegal migration. There is a serious concern about illegal migration in the North Eastern states. Illegal migration has been considered as a cultural and demographic threat for the numerically smaller communities of the region. Ethnic groups of the region are more concerned about illegal migration than their counterparts in other parts of the country. Their insecurity has been further compounded by the insecurity caused by in migration from other places of India by people who virtually have come to control the wholesale and retail trade apart from working in the agriculture sector, as well as household labour, as rickshaw pullers and manual labourers. The North Eastern states share long borders with neighbouring countries and this has led to a more pronounced feeling of insecurity among the local populace in the region for illegal migration from across the borders. The issue of regulating the entry of people into the region through a mechanism such as ILP system has been occupying the attention of the people in the NE states. In Manipur, it took a grave turn when the State Government brought in Bills to legislate related ILP laws.

Migration, in general, has traditionally been dominated by men. The trend is fast changing with more and more women migrating to earn their livelihood

and not just accompanying their spouses. Thus leading to the cultural barriers that prevented them from moving out of their homes gradually breaking down. Likewise, many young North East women have also migrated to different places. It is commonly believed that the mainland India neither understands nor appreciated the North East region. Recent studies on northeast migration have also delved into the alleged discrimination confronting the people of the region in other parts of the country. However, the mainstream population is gradually getting an opportunity to understand the region, and a change in perspective has been seen over a period of time. Migrants face the challenge of acceptance and adaptation in spite of initial resistance, possible social exclusion and explicit political rejection by part of the host population. The two-day National Seminar covers a broad range of topics related to migration and its fallout with special reference to the North East.

Such a Seminar is a rare forum and I am hopeful that there will be brain storming sessions on the well chosen and contemporary topic. I also expect that during this two-day seminar all the experts present here from different parts of the country will deliberate on important issues such as history and cause of outward migration from India's North East Region, identify the socio-economic and motivational characteristics of outward migration, analyse the subjective experiences of the migrants in the host society and their employment aspirations and expectations, pattern of conflict and accommodation between migrants and members of the host society and determine the contribution of the migrant workers both in sending and receiving places. I am fully confident that the deliberations will be a fruitful one.

I wish the Seminar all success and I, once again, thank the organizers for inviting me to this important seminar.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.