

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF KAKCHING WORLD WAR - II MEMORIAL RUN ON 9TH SEPTEMBER, 2018 AT ASSAM RIFLES GARRISON, KAKCHING.

Members of the Kakching Runners,

Officers & Officials of Assam Rifles Garrison, Kakching,

All the participants of Kakching World War-II Run,

Members of the media;

Distinguished invitees;

Ladies & Gentlemen,

We are gathered here today to remember the sacrifices of those soldiers who died in the Manipur theatre of the Second World War. They were the valiant soldiers of the Azad Hind Fauj who fought for India's Independence, soldiers of the Imperial Japanese Army and those of the Allied Forces. Both sides lost heavily and thousands were killed during those few months in what is recorded as Britain's biggest land battle during the Second World War. A number of those were interred and their names etched in the cemeteries while a large number were neither remembered nor properly buried or cremated. They laid down their lives far away from their homes in this place, which most of them never knew existed before they were sent here for the battle. The event is also to remember those people of Manipur who suffered during the war. I am happy to be a part of this noble gesture of the Assam Rifles and Kakching Runners.

Kakching occupies a prominent place in the history of Second World War fought in Manipur. There was heavy deployment of the Allied Forces in and around Kakching and the Kakching Airfield where we stand today served as the nerve-centre of the supply line and

offensive moves of these forces. Kakching was the target for the Japanese forces for these reasons. The battle in Manipur had a unique feature. The Azad Hind Fauj fought for India's Independence alongside the Japanese forces and on the other hand, Indian soldiers were also fighting on the side of the British. Many of them were martyred alongwith the Japanese and British soldiers. People from several countries made the supreme sacrifice here and I compliment the participants from various countries whose citizens had died here, for the trouble they have taken to take part in the memorial run. This shows that even if the historical misadventure occurred more than 70 years back, their countries and people have not forgotten them.

Wars throughout history have rendered millions dead and many more injured, besides damaging the economy of both the victor and the vanquished. To take the matter a little further, I may be allowed to say that in Wars there are no victors in the true sense, as both sides suffer tremendous losses. The loss is not only in terms of human life but also in terms of damage to environment and disruption of political, social, cultural and economic systems. With time, the horrors of the Battle of Imphal have eroded and now the opposing parties have become friends. For the Indians, there were members on both the sides and I would like to take this opportunity to request all of you present here that when we pray for the departed souls, let us do so for all those who were killed and not for particular sides or nationalities.

Today, for Kakching and its people, the war is a thing of the past. The place is now considered one of the most progressive towns in Manipur. It is also known as the granary of the State. I have a good impression of the people of Kakching as they are enterprising and hard

working. These positive qualities manifest in the challenges they take up in any sphere of life. The activities taken up by the Kakching Runners also reflect this trait of the people.

Organizing the Run in memory of the Second World War Martyrs by the Kakching Runners with support of the Assam Rifles is a laudable effort. It brings to the fore the importance of Manipur in the history of the 2nd World War. This effort bringing together both sides will be a small but significant platform for reconciliation, understanding and peace. I am glad that Runners from different parts of the State and outside have come together to join the Run and pay homage to all those who were killed in the battle. It is praiseworthy that the organizers have made no distinction from whose side the brave soldiers fought. Let us all strive for attaining the ideal of global peace where violence is eschewed in all its forms.

I compliment the organizers for their efforts and thank them for inviting me to this memorable event.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.