

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
MANIPUR AT THE KHONGJOM DAY CELEBRATION, 2018 ON 23RD
APRIL, 2018 AT KHEBACHING, THOUBAL DISTRICT

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri N. Biren Singh ji,

Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister, Shri Y. Joykumar Singh ji,

Hon'ble Speaker, Shri Y. Khemchand Singh ji,

Hon'ble Minister (Education), Shri Th. Radheshyam Singh ji,

Hon'ble Ministers and MLAs,

Friends from the Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are all assembled here today to observe Khongjom Day, to remember and pay our homage to those Manipuri patriots who laid down their lives fighting against the British in the year, 1891. It was on this revered ground of Khongjom that the Anglo-Manipuri War was fought and the Manipuris showed to the world their indomitable courage and spirit of patriotism, making the supreme sacrifice for the sake of their motherland.

A handful of Manipuri soldiers with primitive weapons fighting against an overwhelming number of British soldiers, the Battle of Khongjom was a foregone conclusion and the fate of the freedom fighters pre-destined. Historical accounts of the battle are replete with acts of valour and sacrifice of the Manipuri soldiers. They stood their ground against heavy odds posed by superior weapons and manpower and never gave up even in that hopeless situation. The raw courage and love of their motherland demonstrated by our forefathers are stuff of the folklore and deserve praise and accolades of one and all. Freedom fighters of the like of Paona Brajabashi and Major Chongtham Mia have found their place in history and the battle of Khongjom is a glorious saga of the freedom struggle of Manipur and its brave sons. It was the perfect precursor to the spirit of freedom which engulfed the entire

country later on during the freedom movement of India against the British Rule.

While celebrating the Day, we need to remember that foreign powers tend to intervene in the sovereignty of a country, whenever its people are disunited and disorganized. Such circumstances prevailed in our country during the British conquest of India. The British came to India as trader with the establishment of the East India Company. India, then, was divided into a number of small territories. The Kings and Princes of these small entities fought against each other for supremacy. Taking advantage of the mutual animosity and dissension among them, the British started their intervention in India and annexed Kingdoms and Principalities, one after another. Manipur was the last Kingdom to be annexed to their empire. In Manipur too, disunity and enmity among its princes and yearning for the throne culminated in the Khongjom War and resulted in the establishment of the British Rule in Manipur. Today, we have realized that disunity and dissension only weaken the nation and ultimately brings the downfall of the country.

Today, we are all proud citizens of Independent India. Our independence was not the gift of the Britishers, but was attained after a long struggle. This should always be kept in the mind of every citizen. It is time to forget our differences and build a country of our dream where every Indian can live with honour and dignity. India is best described as a country of unity in diversity and its strength is its diversity. The diversities may be geographical, social or cultural but it should always be our endeavour to turn these diversities into positive assets for building a robust and prosperous country. These diversities should not be allowed to become barriers in the way of achieving a united India. Development can happen only when there is peace and stability.

Manipur passed through tumultuous days in the past. The state has faced law and order issues which have often derailed the development

aspirations of the people. This has delayed significantly the pace of development in all social and economic spheres of the state. Things have started looking up in recent times. A sense of peace and confidence has come to prevail in the state. People are moving more freely now and not afraid to venture out in the night. Bandhs and blockades are things of the past and I must congratulate the State Government for this turnaround. Now, a matter of serious concern is the sudden spurt of crime against women and children. There are reports of such heinous crimes happening frequently in the state. It has disturbed me immensely. In Manipur, women are an empowered lot, enjoying freedom and respect in the society since time immemorial. Such social aberrations never happened in the past and totally unacceptable to a Manipuri society. Another grave concern and of alarming proportion is the proliferation of drugs and drug abuses in the state. The life of our young generation has been imperilled. I would urge that these aberrations should be addressed and curbed with utmost priority. I trust that both the Government and the general public will wholly cooperate with each other to erase these social evils for brining development and social harmony in the state.

Let us all work for the common goal of making Manipur a peaceful and developed state. While paying our respect to those brave souls at this hallowed ground of Khongjom, let us rededicate ourselves to the great ideals of all our forefathers who sacrificed their lives for the cause of this state and the country.

I thank the organizers for inviting me to this observation.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.