

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 11<sup>TH</sup> STATE LEVEL PINEAPPLE FESTIVAL-CUM-SELLERS & BUYERS MEET AND YOUTH FESTIVAL-2018 ON 14<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2018 AT THAMBALNU MARKET COMPLEX, ANDRO, IMPHAL EAST DISTRICT

Shri Th. Shyamkumar Singh ji, Hon'ble Minister, Forest and MAHUD,

Shri L. Rameshor Meetei, Hon'ble MLA,

Shri H. Dingo Singh, Hon'ble MLA,

Smt. Th. Babita Devi, Patron Member,

All participating pineapple farmers,

Friends from print and electronic Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be here with you all, specially with the pineapple farmers on the occasion of the 11<sup>th</sup> State Level Pineapple Festival-cum-Sellers & Buyers Meet and Youth Festival-2018 helmed by the Development Organization, Andro Kendra. My heartiest greetings to the organizers and participants of this important function.

The Festival which was started in 2008 with an objective to empower the farmers, bring the farmers to a common platform, search for viable markets, promote agro-tourism and foster the spirit of unity and brotherhood has become a popular event today. It is slowly but surely moving towards achieving its objectives. As you are aware, pineapple is one of the most important horticulture crops in Manipur and a large number of people are dependent on it. There are different varieties of pineapple like Queen, Kew, and it is a favourite fruit for many because of its flavor and health quotient. This horticulture crop is an important avenue for increasing the income of the farmers and there is a need to produce more, while simultaneously taking up processing so that the fruits remain available throughout the year. As we all know, the transportation cost of our pineapple, particularly because the shelf

life of the fruit is rather short, is forbiddingly high and as such while some percentage of this wonderful produce gets consumed in the State, plenty gets wasted. It is, therefore, important to develop the easily marketable products like canned pineapple slices, concentrate, extract and in powder form so that the transportation cost comes down, the shelf life increases and the fruit in a good form is available to national and international consumers year round. This will result in our farming community making good economic gains.

I hope this year's festival will also be a successful one as the previous years and wish the organizers all success in their endeavour. I also do hope that the pineapple growing community will work for increasing the production and write the success story of the fruit. Speaking from my personal experience, the pineapple of Manipur is more tasty and salubrious than those I have taken elsewhere. It is also much sought after outside the State. I have been told that there was good export of pineapple from this State to other countries also not long ago. This fruit could rank as a good revenue earner for the State and we should all make a concerted effort to increase the production as well as its market. The Sellers & Buyers Meet which is a part of the Festival is such an opportunity in the right direction.

Pineapple Festivals are gaining much popularity in the State and it is heartening that such festivals are happening at several places during the season. The festival at Khousesabung village of Churachandpur district located some 45 km south of Imphal was another popular event. Visitors coming from various places of the state were seen thronging stalls while buying pineapples of different varieties at the festival venue. For the pineapple farming community, the festival meant a lot as they got opportunity for wider exposure of their products. The pineapple cultivators of Khousesabung and adjoining villages have been cultivating pineapple as a major source of income since six decades. The Kew variety of pineapple is abundantly cultivated by these farmers. Such festivals will create the right competitive

spirit and enhance the performance of the farmers at different levels.

Obviously, the main problem is the communication bottleneck for transportation of the produce. The people living in the interior parts of the State and the hilly areas have to transport their products to the District Headquarters and State capital for sale. Herein, lies the importance of good transportation system for the farmers to succeed and earn good returns. I am confident that, with the efforts of the Government, the problem faced by the people of not only a particular District but also of all other areas, especially those living in the interior parts of the State will be eased to a great extent.

Organizing a festival or exhibition of any kind provides a good opportunity to the participants for displaying their products and also to meet together and exchange ideas and experience in their respective fields. I hope that this Pineapple Festival-cum-Sellers & Buyers Meet will provide such an opportunity to the farmers and buyers & sellers who are participating in large numbers and with great enthusiasm.

To conclude, I thank the organizers for inviting me to this function. I wish the Pineapple Festival-cum-Sellers & Buyers Meet and Youth Festival a grand success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.