

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE 12TH MANIPUR POLO INTERNATIONAL, 2018 ON 29TH NOVEMBER, 2018 AT IMPHAL POLOGROUND, IMPHAL

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

Shri P. Sharatchandra ji, Hon'ble Member, Manipur Legislative Assembly,

Members of the Manipur Horse Riding & Polo Association,

Members of the Media,

Captains and Members of participating teams including those from abroad,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good afternoon to all of you.

At the outset, I would like to express my enormous delight to be with you all at the closing ceremony of the 12th Manipur Polo International, 2018 which is a part of the Sangai Festival. I would like to thank the organisers for giving me this opportunity.

Manipur, though a relatively small State is indeed a powerhouse of sports. Sports is the pride of the State and only a few days ago, another feather has been added to the cap. A boxer from this very State won Gold Medal in Women's World Boxing Tournament. I am also deeply impressed by the wonderful arrangements and the display at this closing function of the Manipur Polo International. My congratulations to the organizers and all the participants. What pains me a little is that in spite of having the Manipur Polo International every year with the participation of foreign teams, Manipuri Polo is yet to gain momentum on the National scene.

As it is widely known, the game of polo originated from Manipur and the present day Polo evolved from the traditional Manipuri Polo - Sagol Kangjei. Polo as played in Manipur in the bygone days had its own rules known as Kangjeirol. These rules have undergone drastic changes since then and the game is now played under the IPA rules. You will find it interesting that the Manipur Polo International, a tournament approved by the Indian Polo Association is the only one of its kind played on pony. The tournament is unique not only because it is played on Manipuri pony but it is also played at the historic oldest Pologround in the world - Mapal Kangjeibung or Imphal Pologround.

No doubt Manipur has given polo to the world and besides encouraging Tourism and Sports, saving the polo pony is also another objective of this tournament. The polo pony of Manipur, a recognized breed of India, though small, is sturdy and agile. Renewed efforts need to be made to save this breed from extinction. I hope this tournament will help in highlighting this issue and lead to a more concerted effort to save the animal. It is very encouraging that the State Government of Manipur has taken the initiative to establish a Pony Sanctuary at Heingang, Imphal East District and a Pony Breeding Farm at Lamphel, Imphal West District. I hope this endeavour of the State Government will pay rich dividends towards saving the Manipuri pony.

This tournament organized by the Manipur Horse Riding and Polo Association as a part of the Sangai Festival, 2018 has obviously been a major attraction in the festival. The Sangai Festival as such is a collage of the rich culture and traditions of the people of the State, showcasing our diverse cultural heritage through different forms. The polo tournament has added a different flavor to the festival and it has been made grander by the participation of the foreign teams and players. This year, foreign teams from US, England and Uruguay have participated in the tournament. I am sure the

presence of these foreign teams and players will give fresh impetus to the popularity of the game. I hope the participants in the tournament especially our friends from other countries have enjoyed fully the heady blend of the game and culture in the State.

I believe that the participating teams have had a comfortable stay here and they will go back with pleasant memories of playing polo at its birthplace. I would like to compliment the organizers for successfully organizing this event and my good wishes to all of them. I also congratulate the winners and the runners of the tournament for a game well-played.

I, once again, thank the organizers for inviting me to this memorable closing ceremony of the 12th International Manipur Polo Tournament, 2018.

Pum-na-mak-pu Tha-gat-chari,

Thank you.

Jai Hind.