

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE MANIPUR SANGAI FESTIVAL, 2018 ON 30TH NOVEMBER, 2018 AT BHAGYACHANDRA OPEN AIR THEATRE, IMPHAL

Shri N. Biren Singh ji, Hon'ble Chief Minister and his Cabinet Colleagues,
Hon'ble Members of Legislative Assembly,
All the High Ranking Civil and Security Officers,
Members of the Media,
Distinguished Invitees,
All the participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here with you all at the closing function of the Manipur Sangai Festival, 2018. Today's function brings down the curtains on the celebration of the rich cultural and traditional assets of Manipur during the festival spread over ten days.

The Sangai Festival is a calendar event organized by the State Government every year from 21st to 30th November to promote tourism in the State. The festival is a significant step to woo the tourists and make Manipur a popular tourist destination. Manipur has a rich legacy of age old traditions and culture and they are the pride of its people. The festival provides an opportunity to showcase various aspects of our rich traditions and culture, besides promoting our handloom and handicraft products and places of immense natural beauty.

Manipur is undoubtedly a beautiful State with a huge potential to satisfy every tourist's palate for nature. When we speak of the serene beauty of Loktak Lake, we can also speak of the resplendent beauty of the Siroi Hills in the same breath. A number of places in the hill districts of the State can be developed into popular hill stations. Now under the Act East Policy ardently pursued by the Central Government and the State Government alike, steady

increase in the tourism infrastructure like hotels and road & transport and specific initiatives taken up by the State Government like the Sangai Festival, things have started looking up in the tourism sector. Increased commercial and trading activities will also enhance the number of visitors to the State. But we are still far away from realizing its full tourism potential. We need to initiate a multi-media campaign focussing on the positives about the State. This would be helpful to project the State appropriately and buttress our endeavour to make our State figure prominently on the tourism map.

Tourism is considered the fastest growing sector in today's development scenario anywhere in the world. Tourism has become the economic lifeline of countries without much natural resources. It has successfully transformed the economic landscape of these countries and helped in maintaining a vibrant economy. Tourism in the State also deserves due attention. Tourism infrastructure such as accommodation, road & transport are prerequisites for attracting the tourists and these need to be engaged on priority particularly in the hill districts. The issue of accommodation will automatically be addressed if there is a rise in tourists and for this investment will be forthcoming. What a tourist needs is not a five star hotel but a basic clean, hygienic and affordable accommodation. The concerned agencies of the State Government should inspect the hotels and other places of stay regularly to ensure that they are maintained at a minimum standard of hygiene and cleanliness. I am happy that paying guest system has started at some places in Manipur. It needs to be encouraged as Manipur now has many private buildings which easily meet the standard. For this, training of the owners of these buildings needs to be carried out and inspection done regularly. Further, the civic authorities and the people should make Manipur a much cleaner State, particularly the roads and other public places.

It is always a daunting challenge to organize a festival of such a scale especially when foreign dignitaries and foreign nationals participate. There is

always room for improvement and shortcomings noticed or encountered in this year's festival should be taken note of and redressed in the festival next year. Even the concept may be changed and out of the box solutions considered. This year, people could witness new events such as Sumo Wrestling making the festival more attractive. Our attempt should be for a larger domestic as well as foreign participation of entrepreneurs and cultural troupes to add novelty and make the festival more attractive and appealing every year. The festival is also undoubtedly a strong platform for our artistes to showcase their talent. I would urge them to continue their efforts for improving their performance so that the rich cultural heritage of the State is displayed in the true spirit for the tourists.

I congratulate all those involved in the organization of this festival and making the event successful. I also thank the organizers for inviting me to this function.

Pum-na-mak-pu Thagat-chari,

Jai Hind.