

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE PRIZE DISTRIBUTION CEREMONY OF NATIONWIDE COMPETITION ON "LEGAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN" ON 18TH FEBRUARY, 2018 AT RAJ BHAVAN, IMPHAL

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

Dr. K. Sobita Devi ji, Chairperson, Manipur State Commission for Women,

Members of the Commission on the dais,

All the Prize Winners and Participants,

Friends from the Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here amongst you for the Prize Distribution Ceremony of the Nationwide Competition on "Legal Rights of Women" and the Manipur State Commission for Women deserves praise for organizing the state level competition successfully. I also heartily congratulate all the Prize Winners.

The concept of organizing of such a competition is to generate awareness about legal rights of women to ensure that all sections of society are fully conversant with the relevant laws and contribute effectively for their successful implementation. It has been organised as a part of the nationwide programme launched by the National Women Commission for promoting such awareness. The topic of the competition delves into the fear and pain of violence from the women's perspective and the means to end it through legal rights.

Women face violence everywhere, either in the family circle or outside. People are often seen turning a blind eye to these incidents of violence. Violence against women is viewed as "one of the most damaging unaddressed human rights violations in the world today". The Manipur State Commission for Women has been making a consistent effort since its

inception to address issues of women in the state. It was constituted as a statutory body at the state level in the year, 2006 under the Manipur State Commission for Women Act, 2006 to safeguard the interests of women. Its mandate is wide ranging touching almost all aspects of women's development particularly their legal rights and aspirations.

Women have a very special place in our society because of their vulnerability and special needs for their protection. Their rights are not abstract or aspirational. They are grounded firmly in the basic human needs for life, growth and development. They must be protected from neglect, physical abuse, psychological or emotional abuse and sexual abuse that can occur at any home or in the work places. I have heard and read a lot about Manipuri women. After I took up my gubernatorial assignment, I have been constantly interacting with Manipuri women belonging to different cross-sections of the society. Women of the state are courageous and due to their perseverance and hard work, they enjoy a special status in the society along with a degree of economic independence. Meira Paibis of Manipur and their fight against social evil is commendable. Unfortunately, women and children in the state are worst affected by the ongoing social conflicts and insurgency. Widows and orphans are suffering in large numbers. I am looking forward to working a little more intensely with Manipuri women to engage these issues.

The violation of women's fundamental rights through physical, mental, emotional and sexual violence against women has become almost commonplace in the Indian context. There has been a sudden spurt of such activities in Manipur also. With the current state of affairs, it is extremely essential for us to be vigilant and aware of the rights and duties that the law of the land makes available to us. Most women are not aware of women's rights in India and other times their legal rights are not protected as they

should be. The National commission and the State Commission for Women have their role cut out on this count.

The rights available to women in India can be broadly classified into two categories, namely constitutional rights and legal rights. The constitutional rights are those which are provided in the various provisions of the Constitution. The legal rights, on the other hand, are those which are provided in the various laws or acts of the Parliament and the State Legislatures. But mere existence of these constitutional or legal rights is not sufficient. Women should be adequately aware to seek preventive or remedial measures under these provisions.

I am a strong supporter of women's cause and I feel passionately that we need to persistently endeavour to end all sorts of violence against women. I am very pleased to know that Manipur State Commission for Women has already started Legal Aid Clinic from 31st January, 2017 and Helpline "181" from 23rd June, 2017 to extend assistance to aggrieved women. I am fully confident that these two outreach services will go a long way in redressing the grievances of the unfortunate and needy women of the state. Another milestone achievement of the Commission is that it has so far solved 636 cases out of the total 684 cases received apart from conducting 182 spot enquiries.

I, once again, congratulate the Manipur State Commission for Women for the good work they are doing and the prize winners in the state level completion. I also thank the organizers for inviting me to this important function.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.