

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE VALEDICTORY FUNCTION OF THE "ONE DAY STATE LEVEL WORKSHOP ON BIODIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FOR DOUBLING OF FARMERS' INCOME" ON 18TH APRIL, 2018 AT CITY CONVENTION CENTRE, IMPHAL

Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu ji, Hon'ble Vice-President of India,
Shri N. Biren Singh ji, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Manipur,
Shri Th. Shyamkumar Singh ji, Hon'ble Minister of Horticulture and Soil Conservation,
Shri V. Hangkhanlian ji, Hon'ble Minister of Agriculture,
Scientists,
Students,
Progressive Farmers,
Members of the media,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I consider it a matter of great pleasure and privilege to be present here today at the valedictory function of One Day State Level Workshop on Biodiversity and Sustainable Agriculture for Doubling of Farmers' Income. I, on behalf of the Government of Manipur and the people of Manipur and on my own behalf, extend our heartiest welcome to Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu, Hon'ble Vice-President of India on his first visit to the State of Manipur in this valedictory function. Thank you Shri Naidu ji for your gracious presence.

Manipur state is topographically, climatically and culturally distinct from the mainland of the country. Manipur, well known as a little paradise on earth is endowed with salubrious climate, varied habitat, luxuriant forest and rich cultural heritage. The pluralistic society, encompassing various faiths, religions, languages and ethnic groups is a unique characteristic of the state. The people, particularly the youth of the state are resourceful, energetic, yet the challenges are many. There are no big industries, thereby limiting the creation of employment opportunities for the ever increasing unemployed youths of the state. Lack of connectivity and short working season are constraints on the economic development of the state. The state is still

lagging far behind other states of India in terms of availability of infrastructure for social and economic development. In this 21st Century, we are strategizing to be more practical in our approach to identify potential sector for improving economic condition of the people and solving the unemployment problem which is a major issue in the state.

Manipur being under the Himalayan Biodiversity Hotspot and Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot, supports a unique and diverse vegetation, consisting of 450 species of orchids, 54 species of bamboo and 513 species of medicinal and aromatic plants. These species play a significant role in the ecology and economy of the state. The state is also the repository of varied germplasm of rice, including the black scented rice and it is very heartening that many new varieties of rice have also been developed by the Central Agricultural University, ICAR and the State Government. The state is also blessed with ideal agro-climatic conditions for production of large numbers of horticultural plants, such as flowers, fruits, vegetables and tuber crops. “Siroy Lily” which is the only terrestrial Lily grown on the hill tops of Siroy hill in Ukhrul districts holds the distinction of being the state flower. The state is also rich in faunal diversity. Keibul Lamjao National Park, located in the southern fringe of Loktak Lake in Manipur and the only floating National Park of the world, is the home of the famous, but endangered Brow Antlered Deer, locally called as “Sangai”. We can also mention of the Manipuri pony breed of horse and “Kaunayen” an indigenous fighting type of chicken which are the registered breed of the country.

This wide spectrum of biodiversity plays a valuable role in terms of food supply, nutritional security, ecosystem services such as prevention of soil erosion, floods, soil fertility, nutrient cycling, carbon sinks, apart from providing aesthetic value, ethical value and social value. Unfortunately, the rich biodiversity of the state is under varying degrees of threats from natural and anthropogenic factors, including climate change. Loktak Lake, the largest

fresh water lake in the North East and whose role is crucial in maintaining eco-balance in the state is slowly dying due to large scale pollution and choking by heavy growth of 'phumdi'. The lake needs cleaning up on priority. The precious bio-resources of the state are state heritage that needs to be protected and adequately utilized in a sustainable manner. Further, in order to ensure conservation of this important bio-resources for posterity, initiation of systematic works on characterization, evaluation and utilization of these bio-resources is the need of the hour and must be taken up without further delay.

Agriculture and allied activities are the mainstay of the Manipur's economy as about 70% of the people depend on it. Industrial growth in the state is very insignificant. The growth of agriculture in the state also has been quite uneven and unsatisfactory for the reason that its production still depends on seasonal rainfall. In spite of rapid advancement in crop productivity, the faster rate of population growth poses a great problem to agriculture in the state. Occurrence of late monsoon, untimely floods, lack of availability of quality planting materials, fertilizer, diesel during the peak season, lack of irrigation and drainage infrastructure, credit, marketing infrastructure are some of the constraints faced by the farmers of the state. It is pertinent to mention that due to the seasonal nature of agricultural occupation, lack of better return etc, there is a tendency of some of the farming families to move to urban areas in search of other jobs, which can hinder the food production of the masses. This requires urgent technological intervention to make agriculture sustainable, competitive and economically viable. Agriculture based small scale industries and food processing units may hold the key and need to be encouraged.

It is timely that the Government of India, in the Union budget 2016-17 had announced its resolution to double the income of farmers by 2022. In sync with the decision of Government of India, the state Government has

begun its works on developing Strategies to Double the Income of Farmers’ by 2022. I am delighted to learn that the state Government has actively initiated works in consultation with various line departments, Central Agricultural University, ICAR, Bank and other stakeholders and approved the draft strategies for Doubling of Farmers’ income in the state of Manipur by 2022.

I believe that the workshop would have addressed issues pertaining to policies and practices for timely and successful implementation by drawing attention from scientists, entrepreneurs, students and policy makers. The deliberation during the workshop would help in identifying new field related challenges and working out strategies for fulfillment of the dream of doubling of Farmers’ income by 2022, through scientific management of the rich biodiversity of the state and implementation of the good management practices of sustainable agriculture.

I thank the organizers for such a wonderful “One Day State Level Workshop on Biodiversity and Sustainable Agriculture for Doubling of Farmers’ Income” and I wish it a grand success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.