

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE SEMINAR "CHANGING SECURITY PARADIGM IN NORTH EAST - IMPLICATIONS & IMPERATIVES" ORGANIZED BY ASSAM RIFLES ON 5<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2019 AT CITY CONVENTION CENTRE, IMPHAL

Lt. Gen Sukhdeep Sangwan ji, Director General, Assam Rifles,

Distinguished high ranking Army & Assam Rifles Officials,

All the participants,

Friends from Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am, Indeed, very happy to be with you all at this inaugural session of this seminar "Changing Security Paradigm in North East - Implications & Imperatives" under the aegis of HQ Director General, Assam Rifles.

North East India comprising the seven States of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura is known for its biological and cultural diversity and the unique Brahmaputra and Barak river systems. While the seven States are indeed collectively referred together as the North East, there is substantial diversity within the region even as far as political and socio-economic issues are concerned, both historically and in contemporary times.

The subject of this seminar is presently of great importance. We are witnessing or reading about incidents disturbing social harmony, robbing of peace of the society even on trivial matters or disputes, violence - both localized and even widespread on account of communal differences and so on. Loot, extortion, arson, destruction of properties, subversive activities committed by various unknown miscreants and loss of human lives are well-known consequences of such happenings. Peace loving citizens of the society not only feel concerned about it, but are also worried. It is gratifying to know that the

aim of this seminar is to undertake critical analysis of changing security paradigm in North East India, identify implications and imperatives and establish a vision for overall growth and development of the region. Assam Rifles has been serving the people of North East for the last many decades and I do hope that they will keep continuing serving the people to achieve the goal.

Trends and statistics of last decade clearly illustrate that the armed insurgency around the entire region of North East has been gradually waning on a scale of intensity. This apparent shift in the regional security policy of North East has been largely defined or modelled along anti-insurgency. Till few years back, insurgency used to be the core theme of this security policy. There is a more liberal approach to security with greater focus on peace, development and cooperative security with an aim to achieve stability at regional, national as well as global levels. There is thus a new salience and awareness of the comprehensive nature of security. This includes in its ambit the traditional defence-related threats but no less importantly, challenges in societal, political, economic, technological and environmental dimensions as well.

The State of Manipur has been facing problem of insurgency since the 1970s after the formation of People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the year 1978 though the State had already witnessed the Naga Underground movement in the hill Districts. Since then, the number of UG outfits have increased manifold, creating serious uncertainty and tension on account of the deaths and destruction unleashed by their act of terrorism. Insurgent and extremist groups in the State have been indulging in attacking civilians, Government servants, security and Police personnel, imposing bandhs and boycotts and are indulging in kidnapping, extortion from the public, Government employees, NGOs, etc. They boycott National functions and are anti-people, anti-Government and anti-National. The State has been enduring the ill effects of insurgency, which is disrupting the social harmony of the State and is also having an adverse impact on the economic development of the State. Mounting unemployment, economic

backwardness and related issues apart from creating law and order problems also have the potential to affect the internal security of the State. The State continues to be one of the most troublesome States in the North-East due to all these problems.

The insurgent/extremist organizations both of the Hill and the Valley, though not on large scale during the past few years, continue their subversive activities, including ambushes/attacks on the Police and other Security Forces as their main targets. In recent times, there has been a noticeable change in the insurgent movement, shifting away from the ideology of insurgency and instead indulging in terrorism, planting of bombs/IEDs at strategic locations targeting innocent civilians and individual residences, extortion of money from officials, commercial establishments and vehicles plying on the National Highways, etc.

Though the NSCN (IM) is under cease fire with the Government of India, they are still actively involved in extortion and other criminal activities in Manipur. Likewise, the UG outfits belonging to Kuki, Hmar, Paite and other tribes, which have entered into Suspension of Operation (SoO) are also found involved in incidents of extortions. Cases of extortion have also been reported against the valley-based UG outfits which have entered into a MoU with the Government.

As you are all well aware that there has been significant improvement in the security environment of the State, especially in the valley areas due to the well-directed counter-insurgency measures which ensure effective tackling of the various threats. The initiatives taken to combat the law and order and insurgency problems have shown a fairly positive outcome. The result of the stepped up counter-insurgency operations, area domination by the Police/SF is felt especially in the valley districts where the subversive activities of the UG elements have been contained to a considerable extent. Similarly, in the hill districts, the area domination by SF/Police have compelled the UG elements, especially the valley-based outfits to seek refuge in the neighbouring countries

like Myanmar, Bangladesh, etc apart from taking shelter in other States of the country. The pivotal role played by the Assam Rifles to effectively contain the subversive and violent acts of various UG outfits at the long porous International border of 398 kms with Myanmar deserves appreciation by one and all. This coupled with the proximity to the Golden Triangle (Laos, Myanmar and Thailand) and the backyard market of illegal arms and ammunition of East Asian countries of the area makes this border highly vulnerable to smuggling of contraband drugs, arms and ammunition and trans-border crossing by criminals, militants and insurgents.

My dear friends, in my view, till date, the overall security scenario remains a matter of concern as some sections of the population continue to remain under threat from UG groups operating in the State. Continuous counter-insurgency operations need to be conducted in a concerted manner by the Security Forces. It is a matter of great satisfaction to know that the changing security scenario in North East is attributed to sustained and coordinated effort of the Security Forces on ground and the policies of the Government. The security policy should now ideally transition from combating active insurgency to combating the after effects of insurgency. I am fully confident that during the seminar all the eminent personalities from both Army and Assam Rifles will certainly explore the ways and means to eliminate these evils forever to bring a peaceful and prosperous North-East India.

With these few words, I wish you all very fruitful discussions at the seminar and also wish all success to the endeavours of the Organizers.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.