

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE FLAGGING IN CEREMONY OF ORGANIC FARMING TOUR OF FARMERS TO SIKKIM ON 12TH OCTOBER, 2019 AT RAJ BHAVAN, IMPHAL

Maj. Gen. K.P. Singh, IGAR(South) and Mrs. Rachana Singh,

Brig. Neelesh Bhanot, Commander, 28 Sector, Assam Rifles and Mrs. Namrata Bhanot,

All the officials and participating Farmers,

Friends from Electronic and Print Media,

All the distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to have this opportunity today to 'Flag-In' a team of farmers from Manipur on their return to the State after a visit to Sikkim for exposure and learning all aspects of organic farming - starting from production to packaging and marketing. As widely known, Sikkim has been declared an organic State in the country. The trip has been organized by 4th Bn. Assam Rifles, Sajik Battalion from 24th September, 2019 to 10th October, 2019. I would like to compliment the Assam Rifles for organizing the trip successfully and also thank the organizers for their collective effort to organize this 'Flag-In' function within such a short time.

It is also a matter of great satisfaction to learn that in spite of their busy schedule to contain the insurgency problems at that sensitive location, the 4th Battalion, Assam Rifles has been relentlessly making efforts to further their Civic Action Programme in the NE States. I am quite confident that people from different walks of life will certainly welcome this gesture and benefit immensely from the civic action programme of the Security Forces. The vision of this particular programme is mainly to create self-sustaining agro-economics and self-sufficient societies in the rural areas of the North Eastern States by tapping the enormous potential of Organic Farming

available without damaging the unique flora and fauna of the region thereby, minimizing the recruitment ground for insurgents.

The tour programme of the NE farmers has had a well defined objective on some very relevant contemporary issues. The training module consisted of a whole spectrum of activities to achieve successful organic farming for general development. It was aimed at obliterating the breeding ground for insurgency by providing an alternate source of income. Involving the farmers in the lucrative business of organic farming would wean them away from insurgency. Further, the Organic Farming Tour has been in consonance with the Central Government Act East Policy by assisting development in the North East, ensure maximum yield from the available arable land, preserve and regional flora and fauna and improve human health and strengthen rural economics. I am, indeed, pleasantly surprised to know that during the tour altogether fifty farmers from six North Eastern States viz., Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura participated and out of them, nineteen were female farmers. It is, indeed, very encouraging.

Organic farming is catching on everywhere in the world and our country is no exception. People have seen the harmful effect of chemicals and fertilizers on our body. They are turning more and more towards organic foods for a healthy life. The farmers who take up organic farming can earn a decent living as the demand for such products is growing exponentially. Organic farming also has a positive impact on the environment. Excessive use of fertilizers and chemicals disturb the ecological balance in the long run. There is large scale degradation of soil which leads to making the land barren. The NE region is in the first ten bio-diversity hotspots in the world and one way of saving the rich treasure for posterity is to take to organic farming.

The role taken by the Assam Rifles for promotion of organic farming while helping the farmers and overcoming the challenges faced by the Team during the long journey is commendable. Further, we cannot overlook the vital role played by the Team to strengthen better ties among the North-Eastern States. I am sure that all the Farmers who participated in the tour would have gained lot of experience and expertise for organic farming and I am hopeful that the farmers will put what they have gained in terms of knowledge and experience to proper use.

I, once again, thank the Assam Rifles for organizing such an important Farming Tour and wish the farmers the very best in their future endeavour.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.