

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, THE HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE OBSERVANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY, 2019 ON 8TH MARCH, 2019 AT HOTEL IMPHAL, IMPHAL

Shri N. Biren Singh ji, Hon'ble Chief Minister,

Smt. Nemcha Kipgen ji, Hon'ble Minister (Social Welfare),

Prof. Binota Meinam, Hon'ble Chairperson, Manipur State Commission for Women,

Other dignitaries on the dais,

All the participants,

Friends from Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad to be with you all today on this auspicious occasion of International Women's Day observed jointly by the Manipur State Commission for Women and the State Social Welfare Department. International Women's Day on the 8th of March every year is not only an occasion to celebrate the achievements of women in different spheres of life but also to critically reflect on those accomplishments and strive for a greater momentum towards progress for all women in the world.

The importance of International Women's Day is being increasingly appreciated and today it embodies hope and aspirations for women across the world. I wholly share the view that nothing would be more appropriate than the theme, 'Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change' for today's annual celebration at this juncture. The educated women in modern times are just on the threshold of transition from tradition to modernity. They themselves desire that their status and position in society should rise higher. Though a proper climate for such a change is still wanting, yet there have been many structural and statutory innovations for the improvement of their positions. The traditional status and role-sets of women are breaking up and

new role-sets based on achievement, independence and equality are gradually emerging. In the Indian context, woman traditionally had four-fold role sequences. These were her role as a daughter, wife, housewife and mother. This perception or misperception, if you wish, is rapidly changing and a new dimension has been added to her role. It is her heightened involvement and participation in the economic, political and social life. She is being gradually recognised and accepted as an independent social actor, obliterating age-old gender biases. She has to think equal, build smart and innovate for change to remain relevant in this highly competitive world.

The women of the present generation have received higher education than the women of their preceding generations. This has led to far reaching consequences especially in their economic status and also of their families. Increased awareness and education has inspired women to come out of the four walls of the house. Gender inequality or in other words gender discrimination is getting gradually erased and rightly so. The modern woman keenly desires to enter into a work career because of her desire of social status and the pressing economic needs of the family. To fulfil the economic needs of the family and to achieve higher standard of living, women are participating more and more in economic activities. Unfortunately, women's equality in terms of education, employment and power is still more of an individual rather than a universal achievement. The majority of our women are still content to accept an inferior status. This is, by and large, due to the fact that although legally women have equal rights with men, there are not enough jobs for women and working women are not adequately protected from exploitation. These are issues which need to be engaged purposefully.

International Women's Day is also an occasion to express love and gratitude towards women's contribution to our lives and society. It honours the power and struggles of women who have broken all barriers to attain a certain level of achievement in life. The day also honours the voices that go

unheard, the rights that are ignored and the tears that go unnoticed. Even today, there are millions of women around the world who are either speechless or are struggling hard to secure their rights. I am happy to learn that the Manipur State Commission for Women has been confronting and challenging the issues of human rights violations and gender discrimination in the State particularly in the case of marginalized women and girls. I am also happy to see such an assembly of Ima leaders of Manipur gathered here from every district of the State. The womenfolk or 'Imas' of Manipur have a long history of sacrifice since time immemorial. Today, on the day of International Women's Day, I congratulate all the Ima leaders present here as they are being felicitated by the Manipur State Commission for Women and Department of Social Welfare, Government of Manipur.

I would like to make an honest appeal to you all to join hands to transform our thought into action, to empower women in all settings, rural and urban and to honour the activists who are working relentlessly to claim women's rights and help in realizing their full potential. Gender equality is the first step to bring women empowerment in our society. The perception that women are meant only to handle household chores or take responsibility of home and family should change. Instead, both men and women are responsible for everything of daily routine. Men too need to understand their responsibility towards home and family and all other works women do so that women can get some time to think about themselves and their career. Women should also identify their strengths and abilities and move towards a world of empowerment. On this occasion of Women's Day, let us all promise to create a better world to live in.

With these words, I thank the organizers for giving me the opportunity to participate in this memorable event.

Thank you,
Jai Hind.