

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE 65TH FOUNDATION DAY OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU MANIPUR DANCE ACADEMY ON 1ST APRIL, 2019 AT JNMDA AUDITORIUM, IMPHAL.

Prof. H. Tombi Singh ji, Vice-Chairman, JN Manipur Dance Academy,
All the Gurus, Artistes, Staffs and Students,
Friends from Media,
Distinguished Invitees,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Chairperson of the Advisory Committee of the Academy, I am delighted to be a part of this 65th Foundation Day celebration of Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy. On this joyous occasion, I congratulate the entire staff, Artistes, eminent Gurus who are present here today and others associated in various capacities with the JN Manipur Dance Academy.

It is heartening to know that Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy was the first Dance Institute established in the North Eastern region and it has now grown into a premier Manipuri Dance Institute of the country. It was initially established in 1954 as Manipur Dance College and received a major contribution from the Prime Minister's Fund when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was the Prime Minister. Subsequently, it was renamed to its present name in his memory after his demise in 1964. Over the years, the JN Manipur Dance Academy has grown tremendously, producing many eminent artistes who are counted as who's who in Manipur's cultural spectrum. The Academy has seen both high and low during its chequered life till date. The Academy is imparting different levels of courses in various dance forms of Manipur and its Production Unit has performed creditably since its establishment in 1976, producing outstanding dance dramas, widely acclaimed not only in the country but internationally also. Many renowned Gurus have been associated with the Academy and it stands tall like a colossus among the institutes imparting Manipuri dances.

The 65th Foundation Day Celebration is another milestone in the journey of the Academy and I am fully confident that the Dance Institute will not only continue to bring out the best in Manipuri culture but will also pursue various issues relating to it in the world of modern art and culture. JN Manipur Dance Academy's exploits in the field of performing arts should continue to draw inspiration from its spirit and vision for promotion of the rich cultural heritage of the State. Manipur is a State which is culturally rich and blessed with boundless biodiversity but unfortunately, it is economically backward. The State has immense potential and possibilities of economic activities especially in the field of tourism based on its natural beauty and rich culture. What is required is the wholehearted effort from the people that will drive the wheels of progress and prosperity.

Art forms and craft traditions have taken long years to evolve. Dance and music symbolizing joys and jubilations of generations hold the imprints of their long social and cultural history and tradition. Artistes and Artisans of every generation have interpreted them from different perspectives resulting in value addition which has further enriched the tradition. Without their contribution and dedication, probably we would have been at a loss, finding ourselves disconnected with our past and hence, rootless. Keeping the old traditions alive is, therefore, a magnificent form of paying homage to our Artistes and Artisans and to our ancient heritage. There is no other better way to safeguard them than by providing opportunities for performance and ensuring favourable conditions for the Artistes and craftsmen who keep these traditions alive.

The laudable steps taken by the JN Manipur Dance Academy for the promotion and preservation of our culture have, therefore, a special significance for all of us. Our efforts should be to create a favourable environment for the cultural traditions and practices to flourish. In our march towards progress and prosperity, our cultural riches are our assets that make

us proud, beautiful and enabling us to remain connected. We must ensure the survival of our traditional art, our dance forms and our music. We should encourage our youth to keep these skills and creativity alive and robust. I urge for collective commitment for preserving core cultural values and I shall be very happy when this commitment and efforts will translate into further growth of this fascinating Manipur State. I would further urge the faculty members and the students alike that in our efforts to remain relevant in this very competitive world of outperforming each other, we should not lose our way and dilute our cultural entity and identity. It has been a great pleasure to award the certificates to the students and seeing their enthusiasm and dedication, I am hopeful that our arts and culture are safe and have a bright future. I wish all of them a successful life.

To conclude, I am confident that people who are assembled here will experience the cultural vibrancy of this State in the programmes being staged today and I also wish the Foundation Day celebrations all success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.