

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE 13<sup>TH</sup> FOUNDATION DAY CELEBRATION OF MANIPUR STATE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN ON 15<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2019 AT HOTEL IMPHAL, IMPHAL

Shri N. Biren Singh ji, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Manipur,  
Smt. Soso Shaiza, Member, National Commission for Women,  
Prof. Binota Meinam, Chairperson, State Commission for Women,  
Other dignitaries on the dais,  
Friends from Media,  
Distinguished Invitees,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be with you on this 13<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day celebration of the State Commission for Women that began its eventful journey on the 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2006. The Commission is a statutory institution to ensure and safeguard the interests of women and we have high expectations from it in terms of solid sociological thinking and sound advice for the betterment of the general condition of women. Without a doubt, the major thrust area for the Commission is counteracting and eliminating all forms of violence against women in due course of time.

I have been given to understand that the Manipur State Commission for Women has been rendering selfless service to the oppressed and needy women, upholding the dignity of women in the State. When I assumed the office of the Governor of Manipur in 2016, I collected information pertaining to atrocities against women in the State. I was taken aback to find that during the last few years, atrocities like molesting, gang-rape, sexual assault have been alarmingly increasing in the State. In such a tiny and beautiful State, blessed with a rich cultural heritage and where women are held in high esteem and enjoy a fair amount of social and economic independence, I never expected such crimes to happen. It is indeed a paradoxical narrative.

However, I am also impressed to learn from different sources that all stakeholders belonging to different cross sections of the society are fighting as one to set right the wrongs against women. I must say that major share of the credit goes to different Women's Associations and Organizations spearheaded by the Commission. I am fully confident that the situation is bound to improve due to the relentless efforts made by the Commission with invaluable support from the Women's Associations and Organizations as well as liked minded general public.

Unfortunately, at this juncture when Manipur is trying hard to catch up in the developmental race, the State has also been experiencing a number of cases of gender based violence such as rape, murder, assault, molestation, kidnapping, date-rape, wife battering, girl child trafficking and so on which happen either in the domestic sphere or in other work places. Women in the State also suffer from other debilitating challenges which put them at a serious disadvantage when compared to others. HIV/AIDS infected mothers, sisters, widows and orphans are soft targets for social stigma and discrimination, others suffer from trauma of armed conflict and various forms of related human rights violations. It is a fact that many innocent women and girls are forced by circumstances to become sex workers and drug addicts. I would like to request the Commission to explore the ways and means on how to eliminate all these man-made social aberrations.

Today, many women specific and women related legislations to protect women against social discrimination, violence and atrocities and also to prevent social evils like human trafficking, dowry death, rape including date-rape and domestic violence have been enacted. However, the full implementation of such laws is still hindered or delayed due to lack of awareness of the existence of such legislations and the rights thereof by the people particularly the women victims. This is one of the causes for the delay in mitigating the menace confronting the society. In other words, there is a

great need of organizing programmes to disseminate the latest information as to how crime against women can be prevented. I am confident that efforts of the State Commission for Women will be fruitful in bringing about awareness among the people, especially among the women, about the ways and means to protect women.

I hope the State Commission for Women will certainly make an endeavour to explore ways and means to prevent all these crimes with the help of Law Enforcing Agencies of the State. Apart from these crimes, the Commission should also see to prevent any unreasonable domestic violence which is also reported from time to time. I would urge the Commission to undertake promotional and educational research so as to suggest ways of ensuring due representation of women in all spheres of life and identify factors responsible for impeding their advancement. Focus can be given to lack of access to housing and basic services, inadequate support service and technologies for reducing drudgery and occupational health hazard and for increasing their productivity. The Commission may also take up the issue of non-implementation of laws enacted to provide protection and also persevere to achieve the objectives of equality and development of women.

With these few words, I congratulate all the members and officials of the Commission on the occasion of the Foundation Day celebration and I convey my best wishes for success in all their future endeavours. I thank the organizers for inviting me to this Foundation Day of the Commission.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.