

ADDRESS OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF REPUBLIC DAY, 2019

My dear citizens of Manipur,

Khurumjari,

It gives me great pleasure in extending my warmest greetings and best wishes to all of you on the auspicious occasion of Republic Day, 2019. It was on this memorable day in the year, 1950 that India became a Sovereign, Secular and Democratic Republic and gave ourselves a Constitution to steer our destiny. Guided by the Constitution, our young democracy began the march with hope and aspiration towards realising the dreams of the people of India. The day also marks the beginning of a new saga of our endeavour to build the society on a more humane and just basis, free from social discriminations, economic inequalities and religious prejudices. It reminds us of the whole world of opportunity opening before us to make India much stronger and prosperous.

On this day, we also salute and express our gratitude to the valiant freedom fighters who made supreme and selfless sacrifices in the long freedom struggle of our country. Words would not be enough to describe their sense of patriotism and commitment to the cause of the nation. Our boundless gratitude is also due to those learned and distinguished statesmen who had framed our Constitution. At the time of the nation's birth, there were people who doubted the country's survival after Independence. They had no faith in the wisdom of our forefathers and the inner strength of our Constitution. Propped by the perseverance and resilience of our people, those sceptics have been proved wrong and the country is a vibrant democracy today standing tall in the comity of nations.

Our Republic is considered the fastest growing country among emerging global economies. We are already a formidable economic power

in the Asian continent and soon expected to be amongst the top five economies of the world. The bold economic reforms initiated by the Central Government have also started paying dividends. The country has advanced much technologically, touching all spheres of human development. It is, therefore, not without reason that the world is looking upon us with awe and admiration at the score card of this young democracy. Having said that, however, during the last 69 years of our Republic, we have passed through difficult times of trials and tribulations, situations of both internal and external creations. But the country and the people never lost their courage of conviction and self-belief and emerged triumphant every time, overcoming these odds. Friends, we cannot however afford to rest on our past achievements. Let us consign the past to history and invigorate ourselves to confront the challenges of the present. Our collective endeavour must go on to cater to the ever increasing needs and aspirations of the people.

Manipur has also made considerable progress in various fields marching forward with the rest of the States as equal partners in nation building. The State has great potential for economic development being blessed with generous natural resources, manpower resources, entrepreneurial skills and a vibrant society. The talent of the youths of the State in the field of sports is well-recognised and they have shown great promise in other fields as well, such as art, culture and education. In spite of these positive attributes, however, the State is still hobbled by economic backwardness and developmental shortcomings. Friends, Republic Day is not only an occasion for merriment but also of honest introspection – to assess what we as a State have achieved; where we have gone wrong; how to correct the distortions that have crept into our system and also to diagnose the ills and weaknesses that pervade our society and take urgent remedial measures wherever necessary.

There has been marked improvement in the law and order situation in the State during 2018. The State remained free from any major ethnic upheaval or turbulent law and order situation. The culture of bandh and blockade which had become endemic became mostly a thing of the past. The present incumbent State Government is making endeavours to obliterate the so called 'Hill-Valley divide' focussing on the mantra of development. Some of the new initiatives like 'Go to Hills', 'Go to Village', 'Hill Leaders Day' and 'Meeyamgi Numit' to engage the people at the grass-root level and deliver service directly to them have started showing positive results. Manipur is a State of multi-ethnic communities and any efforts made to bridge the gap between the communities and dispel the sense of mistrust would be step in the right direction. The wheels of development can be moved faster only when there is peace and harmony in the society.

Friends, for the past several years, development took a back seat mainly due to lack of an environment of peace and stability. The general perception is changing and things have started looking up. The challenge now before us is take full advantage of this opportunity of new realisation that violence does not pay. We cannot remain trapped in the past, paralysed by memories of injustices and grievances. There are tasks ahead in terms of improvement of our educational system, provision for basic services and facilities of our people, such as health care, water supply and sanitation, roads, transport and communication and more importantly, employment generation for the educated youths in the State. The State Government has been taking up various programmes and projects towards this end. Speedy and proper implementation of these welfare programmes and projects should be accorded priority to enable the benefits to reach the common people.

Friends, we have to ensure that there is transparency and efficiency in the service delivery system and the administrative machinery should be

responsive to public grievances. Wrongful use of public resources is a moral hazard to the society because no society can remain healthy if the good of the collective is undermined by the greed of the few. Apart from being a foe of development and public morality, corruption also bedevils good governance. Widespread corruption, if not effectively combated, would weaken the people's support and participation. It should be the endeavour of all those in power to eliminate corruption in public life as such a negative behaviour eats into the vitals of the system. The step taken up by the present State Government to strengthen the vigilance agencies and public probity is a welcome move. I would appeal to the State machinery and the people to go hand in hand in the fight against such social evil and co-operate fully in the pursuit of their shared objective of peace and prosperity for Manipur.

On this auspicious occasion, let us all look forward and renew our pledge to make Manipur a more developed, prosperous and peaceful State. Let us also resolve to uphold the secular, socialist and democratic values enshrined in our Constitution and join wholeheartedly in the task of nation-building.

Thagatchari.

Jai Hind.