

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE CLOSING FUNCTION OF THE MANIPUR SANGAI FESTIVAL 2019 ON 2ND DECEMBER, 2019 AT BHAGYACHANDRA OPEN AIR THEATRE, IMPHAL

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

All the distinguished dignitaries on the dais,

All the participants from both the country and abroad,

Friends from Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to be here with you all at the closing function of the Manipur Sangai Festival, 2019.

It is a matter of satisfaction that the State Government in the Department of Tourism has been making efforts to make Manipur a tourist destination, and the Manipur Sangai Festival, which has been made a calendar event, is one such venture towards this objective.

The Festival which has been a 10-day affair, but this time it has shortened to 9-day, is an attempt to show-case our best traditions and culture besides promoting our handloom and handicraft products. The festival has been at the forefront in promoting the Manipur Sangai Festival as a platform not only for the travel industry of the State but also for others including national leaders, policy makers, industry experts, business delegates and exhibitors from other Indian States and various other countries.

The edition of the Festival is proof of Manipur Tourism's consistent efforts towards establishing Manipur Tourism as a brand on tourism map of the world. This year the festival has been organized at Hapta Kangjeibung, Mapal Kangjeibung, Lamboi Khongnangkong, Mao at Senapati and at Keibul in Bishnupur District. The event held at Keibul village was an earnest effort of the

Government of Manipur to highlight the importance of saving the endangered State animal of Manipur.

Manipur no doubt is a beautiful State, with potential to develop it into a tourist destination. There are places like Ukhrul, Tamenglong, etc. which can be developed into beautiful hill stations. I may not be wrong to say that Nature has been bountiful and bestowed on Manipur all its splendour. But unfortunately, the potential is still to be realized. Manipur is known more for its law and order problem rather than its beauty and the tremendous human resources. It is a fact of life that negative reports travels much faster than positive attributes. Due to this, tourists generally do not like to take the risk of visiting Manipur. It is for the State Government and the people of Manipur to work towards dispelling this negative aura. Nevertheless, fortunately, for the last few years, number of tourists from both the country and overseas have been visiting Manipur as law and order situation also has significantly improved.

Tourism industry is the fastest growing sector and its economic multiplication factor is the highest. Many countries without much natural resources have harnessed tourism as the main component of their economy with great success. Marketing is the key and I feel that Manipur has faltered in this regard. A greater effort needs to be made to ensure that Manipur is on the tourism map. The issue of accommodation will automatically be addressed if there is a rise in tourists and for this investment will be forthcoming. What a tourist needs is not a five star hotel but a basic clean, hygienic and affordable accommodation. The concerned agencies of the State Government should inspect the hotels and other places of stay regularly to ensure that they are maintained at a minimum standard of hygiene and cleanliness. Paying guest system can also be introduced as Manipur now has many private buildings which easily meet the standard. For this training of the owners of these buildings needs to be carried out and inspection also carried out regularly. Further the civic authorities and the people should make Manipur a much cleaner State, with clean roads, etc.

It is also gratifying to note that the efforts of State Government towards increasing the tourism potential of the State has gained momentum during the last 4/5 years which is evident from the ever increasing tourists inflow to the State.

I am told that this year the number of visitors and the sale during the festival is lower as compared to the previous year. This is despite better publicity and creating a more festive mood at the venue. The concerned agencies should look into this and ascertain the reasons and come up with appropriate responses so that next year such issues are redressed. Even the concept may be changed and out of the box solutions considered. I would like to make a sincere appeal to all the people of Manipur, especially Civil Society Organizations to extend their fullest cooperation to make this calendar event a grand success rather than avoiding.

I am told that this year also number of tourists from different foreign countries visited Manipur to participate the Festival. Manipur is well known for its rich traditions and culture. The Sangai Festival spreading over 9 days this year provides an opportunity to showcase various aspects of our traditions and culture, besides promoting our handloom and handicraft products. The festival is also a strong platform for our artistes to showcase their talent. I would urge them to continue their efforts for improving their performance so that the rich cultural heritage of the State, both from the valley and the hills, is displayed in the true spirit for the tourists.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.