

KEY NOTE ADDRESS OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE LECTURE SERIES ON ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT ABHIYAN AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT ON 30TH AUGUST, 2020.

I am, indeed, very happy to have an opportunity for sharing my views at the lecture series, organized by the Intellectual Forum of North East, Manipur Chapter on “**Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**” and the “**Role of Women in Atmanirbhar Bharat**” today.

"Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan" or **"Self-Reliant India Mission"** which is a vision of making India a self-reliant Nation was announced by Shri Narendra Modi ji, Hon'ble Prime Minister in a trying time of Coronavirus, popularly known as COVID-19 pandemic on 12th May this year. This announcement was heartily welcomed by one and all of our country.

When I assumed the office of the Governor of Manipur in the month of August, 2016, I collected information pertaining to atrocities against women in the State. I was really shocked to hear the news of atrocities like molesting, gang-rape, sexual assault, etc in the State. In such a tiny and beautiful State coupled with rich cultural heritage, I never expected that these crimes will happen. However, I am, indeed, amazed to learn that these atrocities and heinous crimes against women and children have been considerably diminishing during the last couple of years. The credit, I must say, goes to the Women's Organizations/Associations with the unflinching support from the general public and concerned Government agencies as well.

I am fully confident that the Forum will leave no stone unturned to endeavour for the welfare of women in Manipur so that Atmanirbhar Bharat will be meaningful. Women's Market, popularly known as Ima Keithel, manned by women only are mostly below poverty line. Most of the women in the market are unable to run their small business due to paucity of money and they borrowed money from private money lenders with high interest.

Therefore, in case Atmanirbhar Bharat scheme is extended to these Manipuri vendors with very low interest rate coupled with some portion as grant, it will certainly be a great boon to these unfortunate Imas (Mothers). I strongly believe that the Forum will certainly look into this. In spite of all these burdens, the role of women of Manipur in the society is really commendable. I wholeheartedly appreciate the women of Manipur.

As you are well aware that the Government has declared for an inclusive and extensive coverage within Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), boosting scope for private participation in numerous sectors, etc. Here, I must mention something about Manipuri handloom products and handicrafts. Manipuri handloom products and handicrafts is an household industry. In this industry, the female participation is spectacular. But it is important to know that the proportion of population engaged in the household industries decreased by 50 percent. This is mainly due to the reason that less profit accrues in the household (handloom) industries. However, it is quite fascinating to learn that recently State Government has initiated to introduce a system to use handloom clothes in the educational institutions, Government offices, etc. It is indeed a positive step of the State Government and the people of the State, I hope, will welcome this step. Considerable importance has to be laid on this sector as the benefits from this industry would go to almost every household in Manipur. Manipuri women are known for their skill in handloom and handicraft work.

Meanwhile, unfortunately, due to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic the life of every section of the society has impacted badly, especially the poor, daily earners and women at large. The economic impact of this crisis is huge and has hit every sector in a big way. It has already been affected the economic activities throughout the Nation in general and the State of Manipur in particular. In addition, lock down in the State has also been

continuing for the last more than four months, i.e., since middle part of March this year and women are the silent sufferers.

In Manipur, women play a vital role and are the backbone of society in shaping our society. Economic empowerment of women is the most viable solution to integrate women to the developmental goals of the Nation and Atmanirbhar Bharat. Therefore, Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-reliant India) has an important role to play in women's life.

Organization of such a lecture series by the Intellectual Forum of North East, Manipur Chapter at this critical juncture is quite praiseworthy and I wish the Forum all success in your future endeavour for the welfare of the women of the country in general and the North Eastern States of India in particular.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.