

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE NATIONAL SEMINAR 'MAHATMA GANDHI'S INCLUSIVE APPROACH TO HUMANITY' ON THE OCCASION OF 150<sup>TH</sup> BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF MAHATMA GANDHI ON 15<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2020 AT RAJ BHAVAN, IMPHAL

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

Acharya Dr. Lokesh ji, Founder President, Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti,

Friends from Media,

All the participants,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to be with you all this morning at the inaugural function of a Seminar under the theme - "Mahatma Gandhi's Inclusive Approach to Humanity" to celebrate his 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary, organized by Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti under the leadership of Acharya Dr. Lokesh ji. It is, indeed, gratifying to know that the Ahimsa Vishwa Bharti is organizing various programmes not only in the country but in overseas also to mark the 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi with the main objective to establish non-violence, peace and harmony in the society, nation and the world connecting religion with social service to make it a medium to eradicate social evils also linking religion to spirituality.

Mahatma Gandhi is recognized as the Father of this great nation, and I am honoured to address this seminar on the occasion of his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. Mahatma Gandhi was an exceptional leader and human being. He has influenced and inspired both individuals and world leaders in the fight against inequality and oppression, and has provided an invaluable contribution to peaceful freedom struggles across the world.

Mahatma Gandhi's struggle was first and foremost for the freedom and independence of the people of India. But his message was also one of universal relevance. His voice for humanity, equality, justice and non-violence gained global recognition. In 2007, Mahatma Gandhi's

birthday, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October, was declared by the United Nations as the International Day of Non-Violence, and is today celebrated all over the globe. Despite grand thoughts, his was a life of austerity, tolerance, courage and struggle. A person who stood up for what he believed in and who lived as he preached. He spent a total of approximately five years in prison and was imprisoned six times in South Africa and seven times in India. All are for freedom, human rights and justice.

His philosophy and devotion strongly inspired the human rights movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Today, this movement is under renewed pressure in all corners of the world. In many cases, conflict still persists along religious and ethnic lines, often within the borders of Nation States. Mahatma Gandhi's vision of an independent India based on religious pluralism was initially challenged by separatist forces based on religion, eventually leading to the partition of India, at a great human cost.

Today, Gandhi's vision of an inclusive, secular India continues to be challenged, despite India's fundamentally multi-religious fabric. In this time of uncertainty and disruption, the celebration of Gandhi's 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary is a reminder of the continued relevance of his teachings and of their importance all over the world. Let us, therefore, remind ourselves of what Gandhi ji not only said, but also did. I quote; "In a gentle way, you can shake the world". Unquote. Gandhi j's teachings also remind us that change often begins at the individual level, and that we all, as human beings, have the capability to change the world through peaceful activism.

Today, we are celebrating a remarkable man, whose achievements should continue to inspire us, both as leaders and individuals. Allow me to congratulate you warmly on the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, our beloved Father of the Nation.

Many thanks and all the best wishes for a successful seminar.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.