

SPEECH OF SHRI LA. GANESAN, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR  
AT THE 3<sup>RD</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF IMPHAL PEACE  
MUSEUM ON 22<sup>ND</sup> JUNE, 2022 AT IMPHAL PEACE MUSEUM, MAIBAM  
LOTPA CHING, NAMBOL, BISHNUPUR DISTRICT.

Shri Kawazu Kunihiko ji,  
(Charge d'Affairs, Minister & Deputy Chief of Mission),  
Embassy of Japan to India,

Shri P.K. Jha ji,  
Commissioner, Tourism, Government of Manipur,

Shri Atsushi Sunami,  
President, Sasakawa Peace Foundation,

Nippon Foundation,

Distinguished Invitees,

Friends from Print and Electronic Media,

Brothers and Sisters,

I am glad to be here on the occasion of 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Imphal Peace Museum. Imphal Peace Museum is constructed adjoining to the India Peace Memorial, popularly known as the Japanese Memorial. I am happy to know that such a Museum was constructed and inaugurated on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, 2019 at Maibam Lotpa Ching, a sacred place of Manipur and is famous for 2<sup>nd</sup> World War where Japanese Army fought against the Allied Forces till their last breath. Therefore, this place is known as Peace Museum which stands as a testimony and a place to pay tribute for an everlasting Peace and Reconciliation. The efforts made by the Tourism Forum to establish such a Museum and organize such event are indeed praiseworthy.

The Maibam Lokpa Ching or the Maibam Lotpa Ching or the Red Hills is a historic war memorial site of the Battle of Imphal, an important branch of the WWII, that took place in Nambol, Manipur. The site is a small hillock where the battle was fought between the British Army and the Japanese Troops. Renowned for being the site where the battle between Japanese Forces and

British Army in the World War II was fought, the Maibam Lokpa Ching is one of the important places in the history of Manipur. Tourists visiting the tourist attraction will come across a monument in the Maibam Lokpa Ching that is built in the memory of the Japanese Martyrs who sacrificed their lives in this fierce battle. Other than this, there is a manicured garden that has beautiful green plants and flowers that appears to be pleasing to the eyes. Not just this, but Japanese visit Imphal to pay respect to the soldiers of the unfortunate incident.

This Museum now displays and depicts hardships experienced by the people of Manipur during the war and how Manipur which was a peaceful State and the people had to flee from the ravages of war. Most fascinatingly, the Museum also displays a special Calligraphy Signature presented by the Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe with the word: “**Heiwa**” meaning “**Peace**”. It is also gratifying to note that the Museum is among the most visited tourist place in Manipur with more than 28,000 visited in the last two years even though more than 8 (eight) months were closed down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In many ways, the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War had made Manipur leap from the 19<sup>th</sup> century living to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is quite unbelievable that such a decisive battle was fought in Manipur and Manipur with only about 5.5 lakh population at that time hosted over 1.20 lakh soldiers from different countries. When we now look at the present site, we wonder how such a decisive battle could have been fought. The people of Manipur suffered a lot during the war with many families running helter-skelter and Imphal I am told was almost devoid of people during the war. The untold miseries faced by the people of Manipur then were never brought out to the fore. It is nearly seven decades now but people still talk about the deaths caused during the bombing of Khurai Chingangbam Mandap. Manipur had fought many wars with their neighbours but had never used weapons of such nature which caused havoc killing tens and hundreds.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to note that today the Imphal Peace Museum has become the hallmark and testimony of the strong historical connection which the people of Manipur have with Japan. I have also been given to understand that Nippon Foundation and Sasakawa Peace Foundation funded Imphal Peace Museum with the land sponsored by Manipur Tourism Department and implemented by Manipur Tourism Forum and Imphal Campaign Foundation. This effort will bring together the two sides and will be a platform for reconciliation, love and peace. There is however a need for further research to find out citizens of which countries fought during the Battle of Imphal so that representatives of these countries are invited to make it fully inclusive. If I may add, more research is needed to be carried out on the battle sites and these sites need to be preserved and restored in a meaningful manner with proper memorials or monuments erected and maintained so that future generations can understand the sacrifices made from both sides while also spreading the message of peace and affirming that war benefits no nation. I am fully confident that Manipur Tourism Forum will leave no stone unturned to achieve their goals.

The State Government and the Forum can assist families of those who laid down their lives to visit these sites and pay homage to their ancestors and family members. I am sure that if these sites are maintained well, these will become pilgrimages for all from across the globe.

Tourism is the fastest track for socio-economic development the world over. Its multiplier effect in employment generation is unmatched. Its vital role in poverty alleviation and economic growth is well-recognized.

The States of North East Region are blessed with nature's bounty. Their wooded mountains, deep gorges with winding rivers, rolling hills and lush green valleys are an exquisite picture of scenic beauty. The region is the treasure house of bio-diversity, flora and fauna. The colourful and rich heritage added to

the beauty of the picturesque surroundings. In other words, it is “**Paradise Unexplored**” and ideal destination for the tourists, both domestic and international. The tremendous potential for tourism in the region needs to be exploited for the economic growth and prosperity of its people.

I believe that this can be an event to make Manipur known to many parts of the world and will be a harbinger for making Manipur a World War II heritage site and attract tourists from all across the globe, especially from those countries whose citizens had laid down their lives here, thus bringing economic benefits as well to the State. Here the vital role to be played by the Manipur Tourism Forum will be the deciding agency.

It may not be out of place to mention that the other day when I visited Nambol Sub-Division only a few days ago as a part of my visits in all the District and Sub-Divisional Headquarters of both Valley and Hills District, I categorically mentioned and saluted to those freedom fighters from this District. They are, among others, late S/Shri M. Koireng Singh and H. Nilamani Singh who selflessly dedicated their lives to supply foods to Japanese Army. We should always pay our tribute to known and unknown martyrs.

I compliment the organizers for their efforts and thank them for inviting me in this solemn occasion. I wish the Anniversary celebration all success.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.