

SPEECH OF SHRI LA. GANESAN, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF
MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING CEREMONY
OF SHIRUI LILY WEEK ON 25TH MAY, 2022 AT SHIROY
VILLAGE, UKHRUL DISTRICT

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

Chairman, Hill Areas Committee and All the Hon'ble MLAs from
Ukhrul,

All the Hon'ble Ministers & MLAs present here today,

High ranking Civil and Security Forces Officials present here today,

Friends from Electronic and Print Media;

Distinguished invitees;

Brothers and Sisters,

It gives me an immense pleasure to be here at Shiroy Village this morning for the Opening Ceremony of the Shirui Lily Festival. Unfortunately, though, Shirui Festival was celebrated every year as a State Festival, it could not celebrate for the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, it is, indeed, gratifying to note that Manipur has become COVID free State for the last couple of days and hope the same will continue forever. I also compliment for taking the brand of Shirui Lily, the State Flower of Manipur, which was discovered by Frank Kingdon-Ward, one of the last great plant adventurers during his expedition to Manipur in 1946. He named it after his second wife Jean Macklin and the flower won the Merit Prize of the 1948 Royal Horticultural Society. Because of its rarity it is now a well known plant.

The lily, which flowers in late May to early June, is becoming rarer and many experts have felt that it may ultimately become extinct, with the rising temperature and change in the habitat. Earlier, it was thought that due to forest fire the plant was being affected with a plant now bearing only a few flowers while about 3 to 4 decades back, a stalk carried not less than 12 flowers. Now, small bamboos are encroaching on the habitat of the lily and the latter is finding it difficult to compete with the gregarious bamboos. There is a need for proper scientific study on the flower, so that this renowned flower can continue to thrive in its original habitat. I am glad that ICAR has taken up tissue culture of this plant and I hope that it will perpetuate this plant not only in the original habitat but also in laboratory conditions so that it does not become extinct.

The focus on global warming and climate change and its impact on the lily including remedial measures is laudable and I do feel that it is most timely. As mentioned earlier, if intervention is not made the plant may be lost forever. It is not only the lily but other flora and fauna are facing tremendous threat to their survival as their habitats are not only altering but are under severe exploitation. Manipur is also known for its orchids, flora and fauna and it will be huge disappointment to all if this wealth is not preserved and marketed. The jhum cycle is becoming lesser and lesser with the need to feed the rising population as a result the soil is getting easily exposed and subject to erosion. Kingdon-Ward also found a number of Primula species on the Shiroy slope but now the number has dwindled. Due to

forest destruction on the Shiroy range, Ukhrul headquarters is now facing very serious threat on its water supply. So the task at hand is huge.

On the plus side, Shirui Lily Festival if marketed properly can become a tourist attraction. It will not only create awareness about the need for protection of our environment, which need to be targeted to our own people but it can attract tourists which will not only improve the well being of the local population but can also bring in advanced knowledge and expertise to improve the environment. Not only the lily but the monsoon flowers of Shiroy range and the rhododendron during winter can be marketed for tourists.

I hope that greater awareness prevails and the lily is allowed to bloom to its grandeur. If I, in my official capacity, can be of some assistance it will be my pleasure to do so. Let me now congratulate the winners of the various competitions. I am sure their efforts will draw attention to the plight of the Lily.

Last but not the least, I thank the organizers for inviting me to this function which prompted me to visit Ukhrul and this beautiful village and interact with you all.

My best wishes.

Jai Hind.