

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR, AS CHIEF GUEST, AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF THE STATE LEVEL CELEBRATION OF 'KUT FESTIVAL' 2017 ON NOVEMBER 01, 2017 AT 1ST BN. MANIPUR RIFLES GROUND, IMPHAL.

Shri Y. Joykumar Singh ji, Hon'ble Deputy Chief Minister,
All Hon'ble Ministers present here,
Hon'ble Member of Parliament,
Friends from Print and Electronic Media,
All the participants,
Distinguished Invitees,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very happy to be in your midst today especially among our Kuki-Mizo-Chin brethren at this State Level Celebration of the joyous and auspicious occasion of 'Kut Festival, 2017'. Kut is a festival of thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest and one of the most important festivals of not only the Kuki-Mizo-Chin group but also of the entire state.

The 'Kut Festival' which is celebrated on 1st November every year in Manipur is the harvesting festival of the traditional Jhum crops of the Kuki, Mizo and Chin tribes. This festival, which had been in existence in various forms much before the advent of Christianity amongst the various tribes of North Eastern India and Burma, was revived in its contemporary form in 1979 in the Sadar Hills now Kangpokpi District of Manipur. It continued to be held annually as one-day events by incorporating a variety of cultural dances, contemporary music and beauty contests. Since then, it gained popularity in the ensuing years and came to be celebrated throughout the state. It was given state recognition and was declared a state holiday in 1982.

The Kuki-Mizo-Chin groups have their own unique and distinct cultural heritage and this is reflected in their various festivals. Kut is one such festival held during autumn and this festival provides an opportunity to not only make merry but to introspect on our past and plan for the future. This festival which includes songs and dances is now participated by not only the Kuki-Mizo-Chin group but other communities also thereby strengthening the bonds of friendship and is a harbinger of peace, harmony and progress. The popularity of this festival is evident in the enthusiasm with which all

communities of Manipur look forward to and participate. Though a traditional festival giving thanks to the giver for an abundant harvest, it has incorporated modern styles and ethos keeping in tune with the changing times and mores. The celebration now consists of items which are contemporary in character. One such item which is very popular is the Miss Kut competition which is participated by all communities. Change is the hallmark of the universe.

Through the years, as the state passed through political, communal and ethnic turmoil, the significance of 'Kut' itself and all that it stands for has metamorphosed. Today, it is not only an event but a movement for peace, harmony and progress as it has come to epitomize the ethos and spirit required for the disparate groups of people in the state to learn to live together in harmony and in peace. It is a legacy of the past which has been reinvented in the present day and has evolved to be a wonderful event, a panacea and a break away from the violent circumstances that we live in today. This festival has come to occupy an important place in the hearts of all the people of Manipur.

I am hopeful that the celebration of 'Kut' this year will not only help in promoting collective identity of our Kuki-Mizo-Chin brethren but will spread the message of peace, love, communal harmony, friendship and brotherhood amongst the different communities in the North-East and especially in Manipur. We, the citizens of Manipur as responsible people should ensure that we settle our differences through talks and negotiations and not to resort to violence, including bandhs and blockades. Emotional integration cannot be achieved in a single day but a start needs to be made so that we can build on it. Let this traditional festival spread the message of peaceful co-existence for a better Manipur.

I thank the organizers for inviting me to this State Level Kut Celebration and wish all a happy celebration.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.