

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE CLOSING FUNCTION OF THE 11TH MANIPUR POLO INTERNATIONAL, 2017 AT IMPHAL POLOGROUND (MAPAL KANGJEIBUNG), IMPHAL ON 29TH NOVEMBER, 2017

Shri Y. Khemchand Singh ji, Hon'ble Speaker, Manipur Legislative Assembly,

Shri Th. Shyamkumar ji, Hon'ble Minister, MAHUD,

Smt. Nemcha Kipgen, Hon'ble Minister, Social Welfare,

Shri PVSLN Murthy, Chief General Manager, State Bank of India, NE Circle, Guwahati,

Participants from different countries and states,

Friends from Electronic and Print Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

KHURUMJARI,

I am immensely happy to be invited to the Closing Function of the 11th Manipur Polo International 2017 which is organized as part of the Manipur Sangai Festival 2017. I consider it a great honour to be able to walk on this hallowed pologround of Mapal Kangjeibung which is the oldest polo ground in use in the world.

Manipur is well known in the country because of its prowess in the field of sports and has earned the nickname of 'power house' of sports. A small state with even a smaller population in comparison with the majority of the states in the country, Manipur has been peerless in games and sports, bringing laurels after laurels both at the national and international levels. Now, Manipuri polo has to emerge forcefully on the national scene for which I am working.

Manipur is well-known as the birthplace of the game of polo. It had its origin in the traditional Manipuri Polo – 'Sagol Kangjei' and the game has evolved from the traditional to the modern form of Polo over the years. Polo or Sagol Kangjei as played in Manipur those days had its own rules known as Kangjeirol. These rules have undergone drastic changes since then and the game is now played under the IPA rules. Interestingly, the Manipur Polo International first organised in the year, 1991 is a tournament approved by the Indian Polo Association and the only one of its kind played on pony.

Manipur has given Polo to the world and it is definitely something to be proud of for everyone in the state. But it is also a sad fact that the game is suffering from a serious growth deficit. The reasons could be many ranging from lack of sponsorship, high cost to competition posed by modern games. This has collaterally led to dwindling number of original ponies. One of the main objectives for organizing this tournament has always been to save Manipuri pony alongwith popularizing the game of Polo in its birth place, besides promoting Tourism. The polo pony of Manipur, a recognized breed of India, though small, is sturdy and agile. These ponies are even now, literally semi-wild and there is tremendous pressure on them as the traditional grazing ground has shrunk. Renewed efforts need to be made to save this breed from extinction. I hope this tournament will help in highlighting this issue and lead to a more concerted effort to save the animal.

This tournament is organized by the Manipur Horse Riding and Polo Association as a part of the Annual Sangai Festival. I am particularly happy with the entire team of the Organising Committee and the Manipur Horse Riding and Polo Association which have worked hard to make such a mega event happen. While the Sangai Festival has been showcasing the rich tradition and cultural heritage of the State with an aim for promoting tourism, the Polo Tournament itself has been a major attraction in the festival. The participation of the foreign teams and players has added another flavor to the tournament, making it more exciting and grander. I am sure the presence of these foreign teams and players will give a fresh impetus in our effort to popularize the game. This year, polo players from Argentina, England, Morocco and the United States of America besides our host teams, the IPA team and the Manipur team have taken part in the tournament. I hope, the participants in the tournament especially our friends from other countries will enjoy fully the heady blend of the game and culture.

As in the earlier editions, the tournament has been a grand success and I am hopeful that all the players especially our friends from abroad will go back with pleasant memories of playing polo at its birthplace. My compliments to the organizers and all the players especially the winners. I would also like to convey my good wishes to all. I thank the organizers for inviting me to this function.

Thank you.

THAGATCHARI.

Jai Hind.