

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF LAYING OF FOUNDATION STONE OF STATION BUILDING AT TUPUL AND COMMENCEMENT OF WORK AT PORTAL NO. 2 AND FOUNDATION STONE LAYING OF SAFETY TUNNEL OF LONGEST TUNNEL NO. 12 ON 12TH NOVEMBER, 2016 AT 1ST MANIPUR RIFLES PARADE GROUND, IMPHAL.

Shri Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu ji,

Hon'ble Minister of Railways,

Shri Prakash Javadekar ji,

Hon'ble Minister of Human Resource Development,

Shri Okram Ibobi Singh ji,

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Manipur and his Cabinet Colleagues,

Hon'ble MPs,

Hon'ble MLAs,

Shri H.K. Jaggi,

General Manager, NF Railway (Construction),

Friends from Media,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to associate myself with this auspicious and significant function of laying the foundation stone of the Safety Tunnel of Longest Tunnel No. 12 and Station Building at Tupul and Commencement of Work at Port No. 2. The National project of Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal Rail Link in Manipur, the foundation of which was laid by the Prime Minister in 2004, commenced construction in the year, 2007. This Project is of utmost national importance as it is aimed at providing alternative connectivity and access to Manipur through an extremely difficult and inaccessible terrain and a reliable

means of transportation of people and essential commodities to the state. The completion of the project will create better connectivity to this beautiful state.

The project is also of special interest in view of extreme topographical challenges. The terrain necessitates that the rail line has to keep rising from 31 metres above mean sea level at Jiribam to 788 metres above mean sea level (msl) to reach Imphal. On its way, the rail line has to cross the mountain ranges, hilly rivers and deep gorges. The special features of the project from Jiribam to Tupul include construction of 34 tunnels with a length of 39.4 kms, out of which the longest is 4.9 km. Further, most interestingly the project also includes construction of 4 tall bridges out of which one bridge near Noney will be the world's tallest railway truss bridge where the height of pillars is of the order of 141 metres surpassing the previous tallest bridge of 139 metres in Montenegro, Europe. The project will undoubtedly put to severe test the remarkable human ingenuity and patience. I had an opportunity to go to that bridge in Montenegro and it was quite scary when the train passes over it but extremely beautiful and exciting experience. I will look forward one day to pass over this bridge in Manipur.

As we are all aware, this rail link has assumed greater significance under the Central Government's Look-East Policy now hotly pursued as Act-East Policy. Further, extension of rail link to the border town of Moreh and beyond already on the agenda under consideration will open a whole lot of avenue of trade possibilities and re-establishment of old cultural ties with the South and South-East Asian countries. We have shared traditions and social values. We have shared history. We have shared geography and most importantly we have shared destiny. We have to revive our common cultural roots.

Manipur is a landlocked state and by and large, its development deficit has been attributed to poor connectivity. Access to the state through land

routes is very restrictive. With the coming of the railway line, there will be a sea-change in the connectivity scenario and we can look forward to sustained economic activities happening in the state.

I am happy to know that the overall progress till date is 57.8% financially and the target date of commissioning of Jiribam-Dholakhal of 12.50 kms is 2016-17, Dholakhal-Kambiron of 24.43 kms is 2017-18 and Tupul-Imphal of 26.93 kms is 2019-20. I extend my appreciation to the Railway authorities for their relentless endeavour to put this difficult terrain on the railway map.

I have been told that this rail link project has suffered very so often from bandhs and blockades setting back the progress by several months or perhaps years. The construction works are disturbed now and then because of these bandhs and blockades and sometimes due to land disputes. Therefore, I appeal to all concerned not to disturb developmental projects under any circumstances considering the profound importance of economic development in the state. Such act of omission or commission would be tantamount to destroying our own future.

I have known Mr. Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu for almost 36 years. He and I shared the same lane in Santa Cruz in Mumbai and I know his dedication towards his job. I am sure with his dedication and enthusiasm, he will make the whole team of engineers, experts and workers to finish the project within the stipulated time.

While reiterating my appreciation for the efforts put in by all stakeholders for putting this project well on track, I thank you for inviting me to this function and for giving me this opportunity.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.