

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AS CHIEF GUEST AT THE CLOSING FUNCTION OF THE MANIPUR SANGAI FESTIVAL, 2017 AT BHAGYACHANDRA OPEN AIR THEATRE (BOAT), IMPHAL ON 30TH NOVEMBER, 2017.

Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri N. Biren Singh ji,
Hon'ble Governor of Meghalaya, Shri Ganga Prasad ji,
Hon'ble Dy. Chief Minister, Shri Y. Joykumar Singh ji,
Hon'ble Members of the Council of Ministers,
Hon'ble Members of Manipur Legislative Assembly,
All the participants,
Friends from Electronic and Print Media,
Distinguished Invitees,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
KHURUMJARI,

It is my pleasure to be with you all today at the closing function of the Manipur Sangai Festival, 2017. This 10-day festivity is already a calendar event in the state commencing from the 21st November every year and it is something everyone looks forward to for an enriching and delightful experience of the rich culture and traditions of the state.

Manipur is well known for its rich traditions and culture and the Sangai Festival aims at capitalizing on these precious assets for promotion of tourism in the state. It provides a wonderful platform to showcase various aspects of our traditions and culture as well as generating interest in our handloom and handicraft products. The Festival has come a long way since its inception and it is now recognized as a national event drawing attention and participation from far and wide including outside countries.

Manipur is endowed with its bountiful share of natural beauty like its serene hills, scenic landscapes, exotic flora and fauna for making it into a top tourism hub. The panoramic beauty of its Valley and Hill districts is enough

to satisfy every tourist's palate for nature. The heady beauty of the Siroy Hills is no less than the mesmerizing beauty of the Loktak Lake. A number of places in the state both in the valley and the hills have the potential to develop into popular tourism spots which can be looped into tourist circuits.

In step with the steady improvement in the tourism infrastructure such as hotels and road & transport and initiatives taken by the State Government like the Sangai Festival, things have started looking up in the tourism sector. The Act East Policy powered by the Central Government is also poised to open up new avenues for tourism. But the state is still far away from attaining the recognition it deserves. We must persist with our efforts for exploiting the full tourism potential of the state. It is in our hands, the State Government and the people of Manipur to take the state forward. If the tourism potential is tapped successfully, our state can also maintain a vibrant economy.

In the context of the state's economy, I am glad that the State Government organized the North East Development Summit on 21st and 22nd November, 2017 as a part of the Sangai Festival. The Summit brought into sharper focus the various developmental activities which could be taken up in the state. It has been a very good initiative to promote investment in the state as the Summit concluded on a high with the signing of about 39 MOUs. I would like to congratulate the Hon'ble Chief Minister on the tremendous success of the Summit and all those others also who helped in organizing the same.

I am happy that all concerned authorities have put in their best efforts to bring the festival up to this level. It is always a daunting challenge to organize a festival of such a scale, especially where there is foreign participation also. This time, the festival has expanded and happening at 3 (three) separate venues simultaneously. There is always room for improvement and shortcomings noticed or encountered in the current festival

should be taken note of and redressed in the festival next year to make it bigger and better. Every citizen of Manipur should ensure that this festival is made a success every year in the interest of the state and its people.

The festival is a rare platform where our artistes have a chance to show their talent. I would urge them to continue their efforts for improving their performance so that the rich cultural heritage of the state is displayed in its true spirit to entice the tourists. I am sure all of you have also enjoyed the International Polo Tournament, another unique flavor of the festival. A cocktail of indigenous games also kept you engrossed at the Khuman Lampak Sports Complex.

My compliments to all those involved in the organization of this festival and I also thank the organizers for inviting me to this function.

Thank you.

THAGATCHARI,

Jai Hind.