

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL CEREMONY OF MANIPUR SANGAI FESTIVAL, 2017 ON 21ST NOVEMBER, 2017 AT HAPTA KANGJEIBUNG, IMPHAL.

Hon'ble President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind ji,

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

Hon'ble Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Govt. of India, Shri Suresh Prabhu ji,

Hon'ble Chief Ministers of Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh,

Distinguished Invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be associated with the inaugural function of Sangai Festival, 2017. I, on behalf of the Government and the people of Manipur and on my own behalf, extend our heartiest welcome to the Hon'ble President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind on his maiden official visit to the State of Manipur to inaugurate one of the biggest festivals of this State.

Sir, I must mention here your special affection for North East as you started your campaign from North East as a candidate for the Presidency. The Tourism Department under the State Government has been making persevering efforts to make Manipur a tourist destination and the Manipur Sangai Festival, which has been made a calendar event, is one such venture towards this objective. The Festival which is a 10-day affair, is an attempt to show-case our best traditions and culture besides promoting our handloom and handicraft products. Manipur is considered the birthplace of the game of Polo and the Manipur Polo International which is held alongside the Sangai Festival is an added flavor. Its popularity is on the rise as more and more domestic as well as foreign players and tourists are showing keen interest.

Manipur no doubt is a beautiful State with potential to develop it into a tourist destination. There are places like Ukhrul, Tamenglong which can be developed into beautiful hill stations. I may not be wrong to say that Nature

has been bountiful and bestowed on Manipur all its splendour. Manipur is a bio-diversity hotspot with a rich heritage of flora and fauna and it can easily grow to be a tourism hub. Earlier, Manipur used to be known more for its law and order problem rather than its beauty and the tremendous human resources. Now things are looking up and the present Government has been successful to a great extent in dispelling this negative aura.

As all of us know, tourism industry is the fastest growing sector and its economic multiplication factor is the highest. Many countries without much natural resources have harnessed tourism as the main component of their economy with great success. Manipur with its rich cultural heritage and more than 30 (thirty) colourful tribes can easily rank as a major tourism centre. Marketing is the key factor. A greater effort is being made to ensure that Manipur gets its rightful position on the tourism map.

We have the Manipur University of Culture which is the only second such University in the country and the Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy was established as early as 1954. In the field of sports, the young boys and girls of the State have been peerless. They have excelled in different sports disciplines such as Fencing, Boxing, Football, Martial Arts and Wrestling. The names of Mary Kom, Sarita are well known for Boxing. Very recently, in the FIFA World Cup Under 17 as many as 8 players from the State represented the country. Manipur is better known as the powerhouse of sports.

I, once again, thank Hon'ble President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind for showing such consideration and kindness towards us and agreeing to come here today to grace this Festival as Chief Guest. We are grateful to the Hon'ble President and I assure you, Sir that your presence here today is a land-mark moment in the history of Manipur. This is your first official visit and we hope you will visit us again in the near future.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.