

SPEECH OF SHRI LA. GANESAN, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR ON THE OCCASION OF THE WORLD AIDS DAY, 2021 AT 1<sup>ST</sup> BN. MANIPUR RIFLES, IMPHAL ON DECEMBER 1, 2021.

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

Shri V. Vumlunmang ji, Addl. Chief Secretary (Health & Family Welfare),

Hon'ble MLAs,

Dignitaries,

Officials of Health and Family Welfare Department, Medical Institutes,

Representatives from NGOs,

Distinguished Invitees,

Youth and Students,

Friends from Print and Electronic Media,

Brothers and Sisters,

Mayam Pum-na-mak-pu Khu-rum-jari,

It is indeed my pleasure to be with such dignitaries, here this morning on the occasion of the World AIDS Day, 2021. The 1st day of December, every year, is observed as World AIDS Day since 1988. It is an international day dedicated to raising awareness of the AIDS pandemic caused by the spread of HIV infection and mourning those who have died of the disease. Today, the World AIDS Day, 2021 is being observed with the theme - “**End Inequalities, End AIDS, End Pandemic**” with a special focus on reaching people left behind, and highlighting the growing inequalities in access to essential HIV services and treatment.

World AIDS Day, is a very important event all over the world particularly in the State of Manipur, where the people have experienced the impact of the HIV epidemic for three decades. Many innocent young people have died due to AIDS related diseases in Manipur. A number of children have been made orphans and many young women, widows due to this epidemic.

I am happy to know that the State has made “AIDS Policy of Manipur” which has been very effective. I have been given to understand that the State of Manipur was the first and only State in India to have a “State AIDS Policy” as early as 1996. Now, it is imperative to make modifications and improvements in the policy statement so as to suit the changing circumstances and trend of the epidemic. I do hope that the experts and intellectuals in this field shall give their suggestions from time to time for making the policy appropriate as per the situation and it will be of immense help to society in mitigating the menace of HIV and AIDS in this State.

We all are happy that the National AIDS control programme is being successfully implemented in the State with funding through the NACO, Government of India. The Manipur AIDS Control Society is the nodal agency for implementation of this programme. The programme is implemented through active collaboration between various Government and non-Government Agencies.

It is important to note that statistics reveal that the magnitude of the problem in Manipur at the early stage was highly alarming in the sense that innocent pregnant housewives, who represent the general

population, had been infected by HIV. However, it is, indeed, gratifying to note that after a decade, the infection among the mothers as well as youngsters had been significantly diminishing. It is a matter of great satisfaction to note that the HIV prevalence rate among Injecting Drug Users (IDUs), and other Men and Women have significantly come down during the last two decades. Nevertheless, I suggest that small children should get utmost care and protection in this regard. It is the responsibility of the society at large, to have a greater involvement in the fight against HIV and AIDS to safe guard the future of Manipur. We as a society must also make sure to help the children, who have been affected directly and indirectly, by AIDS related diseases and endeavor to make them successful in life.

Our State in the North Eastern corner of the Indian sub-continent is renowned throughout the world for excellence in the field of games and sports, Art and Culture and a beautiful composite civilization comprising a number of small ethnic groups. I appeal to all youngsters of the State to remove their fear and ignorance with regard to HIV issues and make earnest desire to be physically and mentally fit, by involving themselves in sports and Cultural activities. This is not only for their own protection but also for saving the future generation. We must promote voluntary HIV testing before marriage in this regard.

The HIV and AIDS issue is no longer a mere health issue. It has covered all aspects of life - social, economic, legal, human rights and even political. The all-out and concerted efforts of the health officials and concerned activists of the State will not be sufficient in tackling

this issue. The civil societies have to be actively involved. Here, I would like to appreciate the role of non-Government Organizations and agencies during the last three decades in providing preventive services and care to the people. Without the active role of the NGOs, the situation would have been worse.

On this occasion, I appeal to the young people, to become more and more aware of HIV and AIDS issues and also to participate actively in the programmes and policies of the Government and NGOs in the fight against HIV and AIDS, and help the children affected by HIV by letting them have a bright future. Let us join in making a HIV free Manipur.

Pum-na-mak-pu Thagat-chari,

Jai Hind.