

Speech of Shri N Biren Singh Hon'ble Chief Minister, Manipur on the occasion of the Commemoration of the 73rd Anniversary of Battle of Imphal WW II.

May 20.

His Excellency Mr Kenji Hiramatsu, Ambassador of Japan to India, Mr C Apok Jamir Hon'ble Parliamentary Secretary Tourism, Nagaland, Mrs Akiko McDonald, Chairperson Burma Campaign Society, all the delegates from different parts of the world, members of the Manipur Tourism Forum and 2nd World War Imphal Campaign Foundation, distinguished guests, friends of the media and all who have gathered here to join the Commemoration of the 73rd Anniversary of Battle of Imphal WW II.

We are gathering here to commemorate and remember the past. After hearing the heart touching and breaking story from Madam, what will I say more?

Everything has been narrated, and the main word which I noted, is Reconciliation.

One of the greatest events of the world that changed the course of history of mankind-the 2nd World War-is remembered for many reasons.

We all witnessed the unfathomable destructions, human tragedies leaving behind irreparable relationships amidst the transformation in the demographic profiles of many nations.

Even after the 2nd World War, the people of Nagaland and Manipur suffered due to effects of the battles.

Today, after more than seven decades, we gather here for a different purpose. With delegates from many countries, mainly from Japan, the Manipur Tourism Forum and the 2nd World War Imphal Campaign Foundation initiated to organise the Commemoration of the Anniversary of Battle of Imphal.

Many of us do not know what happened in other parts of the world during the war. For, the battles that took place here is known as Japan Laan. We call it Japan Laan. Today, historians, war researchers continue to tell and unfold many untold stories and the significance of the events that took place in and around Manipur.

In such a small and an insignificant valley, there were as many six Airfields, over 3 lakh personnel from different parts of world at a point of time. Manipur became one of the strategic and vital connecting point for a gigantic circle.

It was a historic moment when highest functionaries from different countries converged here some years ago with a special purpose--Reconciliation.

The silent valley and the mountains of Manipur is where many were mortally wounded. Many were fortunate to return to their homes to be reunited with their near and dear ones. Every personnel who was here will have many stories to tell.

Although the Battle of Imphal is being told from the month of March to June, 1944, I believe there are many stories. Those who spent their prime youth far away from their homes and families--some unfortunate and could not return--became a part of history.

For many, they look at Manipur. Their journey to Manipur is a pilgrimage to reconnect, emotionally and spiritually with their ancestors. We understand the passage of human thoughts embroiled in conflict and coming to terms with reality and the biggest realisation of Reconciliation--to live in peace, forgive and forget, and looks towards humanity of generosity and global fraternity.

With hundreds and thousands of stories unfolding after so many years, Manipur is emerging again as a sacred place to find eternal peace. You all have come to Manipur at the most important and crucial time. We are also at the Crossroad waiting for an angel to show us the path. And you are our angels showing the seraphic path to wisdom and humanity.

Your journey to Manipur is happening when our own society is embroiled in a series of conflicts within. We are comparatively a young and energetic society with reference to the global environment of science and technology.

The realisation of great nations--re iterating and constantly reminding values of human lives and the impacts of violence will surely be noticed by our own citizens here.

The Commemorations of the Anniversaries of Battle of Imphal WW II have great significance for all of us. We are also looking for Peace and Harmony, an everlasting peace for all throughout the world for the sake of our children and all those who are not yet born.

I would like to make a special mention, Madam Akiko McDonald, Chairperson Burma Campaign Society, your life is an example how a lone lady has inspired and moved many hearts. Your maiden visit to Manipur is a historic chapter for us. I am told you have gone to places in Manipur already where I have never been to. You are only 65 years young. Your untiring energy for a great cause of Reconciliation will inspire us all. I am told you will be staying here and travelling to remote places.

Madam Akiko, every time you come to Manipur, you will be my guest. I wish to adopt you as my elder sister. Or you have to adopt me as your younger brother.

I am already a follower of your belief of Reconciliation, which I am also similarly doing with my Kuki brothers and Naga brothers. Hon'ble Chief Minister of Nagaland recently visited Manipur. We had lunch together. And the entire North East is changing now. I am following you Madam for Peaceful coexistence. Let me assure I will work till the end of my life in my humble way to spread your philosophy of Living Together. I had the opportunity of seeing and listening to your recorded message in our previous occasion of Commemoration Programme. Now I am meeting you in real life. It is an honour and an privilege.

My friends from Nagaland have already invited you as a State Guest. Please be our special guest. Come again and again to Manipur. I wish you a good health and pray to Almighty. I want to adopt you as one of us.

His Excellency Mr Kenji Hiramatsu, your predecessor Mr Takeshi Yagi visited Manipur twice. Your second journey will also be a harbinger of a Goodwill. I personally would like thank you for

impressing upon your countrymen--indeed the largest Japanese Delegation ever, to visit Manipur.

This year's Commemoration and your participation will definitely be a guiding force for my Government to look forward to a future of our own, a partnership of growth and mutual understanding.

Regarding the land which you mentioned for the construction of a War Memorial, the state government will be totally behind you hundred per cent, whatever is needed, the state government will extend every possible assistance. Even though we are a poor state, if required, we will extend monetary assistance for it.

Although separated by man made boundaries, we share a great deal inseparable bond. I am happy that my friend Mr C Apok Jamir Hon'ble Parliamentary Secretary Tourism Nagaland accepted our invitation to attend this occasion. I look forward to the future events when the civil organisations from Nagaland and the Manipur Tourism Forum and 2nd World War Imphal Campaign Foundation can join hands together and prepare a collective Commemoration Programme.

I am very happy that you have invited His Excellency Mr Kenji Hiramatsu Japanese Ambassador to India and me. I hope I will be there definitely on the occasion.

The State of Manipur, however small, offers to the world a humble existence. I am sure all the delegates from different parts of the world will have a memory to take home. Please accept our humble hospitality.

I personally like to congratulate and the two organisations, the Manipur Tourism Forum and the 2nd World War Imphal Campaign Foundation for connecting the rest of the world. I am sure you are planning for 75th Anniversary of Battle of Imphal. My government will extend every possible assistance. Please keep us updated on the plans well in advance so that necessary communications can be facilitated in time.

Once again, I would like to thank all of you for visiting Manipur and look forward to seeing you again.

Regarding the flower Kombirei, which His Excellency mentioned in Yaral pat, you narrated that it was found thousand years ago in Japan. You have mentioned that the flower might have gone from Japan to Manipur. I feel it has gone from Manipur to Japan. Once again I thank you all for coming to Manipur.

Thank you. Have a Great Evening. JAI HIND.