



Address by the Hon'ble President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind at a special session of Mizoram legislative assembly Aizawl, November 30, 2017

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1. This is my first visit to Mizoram after being elected President of India. I am truly happy to be here and thank the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Chief Minister and all the other members of the Mizoram Legislative Assembly for inviting me to address this House.
2. Mizoram is special in India. It stands out for a very mature and dignified political culture. This Assembly is the true embodiment of Mizoram's political culture as well as of the will and aspirations of the people of the state. We are aware of the three Ds of the legislature. This is a place to **debate, dissent** and finally **decide**. Yet there are other principles to follow too. Ideally, the functioning of the legislature should be marked by **dignity** and **decorum**. And the political system should not allow **differences** to become **disputes**.
3. While these principles are cherished in all democracies, they are not always followed. Sometimes, there are unfortunate disruptions. Here, I must commend and congratulate the Assembly of Mizoram. In its 45-year history, it has established a reputation for smooth conduct of business. The behaviour and participation of its members – of all of you, I should say – has conformed to the highest standards. This Assembly is a role model for our democracy and for how a legislative House should function.
4. The sense of honour and dignity that one sees in public life in Mizoram is heart-warming. It is also typical of this state's rich society. The signing, implementation and adherence to the Mizo Accord of 1986 is still held up as a shining example all over the world. Yesterday I called it a **miracle**. And it truly is a miracle in the way in which it ended an insurgency situation and a conflict that had divided our country and Mizo society itself.
5. All political stake-holders as well as civil society groups – including the Church and Church-affiliated groups, women's groups and other non-governmental organisations – have got together to create an atmosphere for peace and development in Mizoram. The Accord and its legacy represent one of the greatest successes in India's long history. One must recall the enlightened and far-sighted leadership of Pu Laldenga, as well as the efforts and generosity of spirit of Pu Lal Thanhawla, who is of course the Chief Minister today as well. And here I would also like to mention another stalwart of Mizoram, the respected Brigadier T. Sailo. Our Mizoram and our India owe these nation builders so much.

Members of the House

6. India is a nation of astonishing diversity. In our country – and frankly even within **states** of our country – we see a huge variety of ethnic and religious identities, and so many languages, cultures and customs, modes of dress, food habits and types of cuisine. This diversity is our strength. It enriches each of us and contributes to both the unity and the wonder of India. It is important to preserve and cherish this diversity.
7. Economic integration and the movement of people from one part of the country to another for work or education are making all of us much more familiar with each other. For example, young men and women from Mizoram may be found working in the hospitality industry in Kerala or in an IT company in Pune. They contribute, they earn, they stand out for their professionalism – and they add to the cultural wealth of our shared society. It is this **human connectivity** that makes our country so unique.
8. It is critical to complement it with **physical and infrastructural connectivity**. That is why Mizoram is such a focus of the government of India's Act East Policy. This Policy aims at enhancing connectivity and trade linkages between Mizoram and the other states of the Northeast and the rest of the country – as well as neighbouring countries of Southeast Asia.
9. This will give Mizoram's agricultural produce and traditional products access to new markets. It will also strengthen IT and Internet connectivity, a process that will have a multiplier effect across a range of industries. Once we create this infrastructure, we can simply leave it to the entrepreneurship, the energy and the genius of the young people of this state to capitalise on it. With their high literacy levels and English-language skills, a golden opportunity lies before the youth of Mizoram.
10. To emphasise a point, I made in another speech recently, for a short time in our history there was a misconception about the Northeast being a "frontier". Far from that, it is at the heart of an ancient trade corridor. For centuries, South Asia and Southeast Asia have been perceived as a composite trading region, with cultural similarities as well. Mizoram is right at the centre of this process and of this area. Mizoram's geography can be its biggest asset – and the government of India is working to ensure just that.
11. A member of the House is elected by his or her voters. But once elected, the MLA represents the entire constituency, and not just those who have voted for him. The legislator equally represents those who did not vote for him or in fact those who opposed him. Similarly, a rival in an election is a political competitor and not an enemy. After the election, the competitor could become a colleague in the task of ensuring the well-being and development of a constituency, of the state and of the country.
12. This is the beauty of a democratic polity that we must appreciate. I am glad to see that this philosophy has such an instinctive acceptance in Mizoram. Please keep it up.

13. In a short while, I will leave Aizawl and Mizoram. I am reluctant to go as the charm and warmth of the people of the state and the loving reception that I have received here have really touched my emotions. In particular, I was very struck by the friendly, easy-going and yet disciplined manner in which people of the city lined up to greet me as I drove from the helipad yesterday. Some of the lovely smiles I saw are still fresh in my memory. I promise to come back.

14. And before I conclude, I would like to convey to all the members of the House, as well as to the officers and staff of the Assembly, the security persons deployed here, and of course all your families -- and indeed all the people of Mizoram - my best wishes for the upcoming Festive Season.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year in advance. May all our dreams for Mizoram come true!

Thank you

Jai Hind!

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