



Address by the Hon'ble President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind on the occasion of inauguration of Hornbill Festival and State Formation Day celebrations, Kisama, December 1, 2017

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1. It is an honour to be among you in this green and beautiful land of Kisama, as we celebrate 54 years of statehood for Nagaland and the inauguration of the Hornbill Festival 2017.
2. On this occasion of State Day, I extend my warm greetings and best wishes to the people of Nagaland. I wish you all a bright future, full of peace and prosperity. I also congratulate the state government for organising this 'Festival of Festivals', the Hornbill Festival, to celebrate State Day. I commend the Chief Minister and his team for such an impressive show.
3. This is my first visit to Nagaland after having taken over as the President of India. I am glad it has coincided with what has become a flagship tourism event for the state and for our entire country.
4. The Hornbill Festival is the perfect showcase of rich Naga culture and traditions, preserved over the years in the form of music, dance and food. The **Hornbill Festival at Kisama** and the **International Music Festival** represent the diversity of Naga society. We have the best of traditional dance and music, and we have the best of modern musicians and artistes.
5. Today we all witnessed such a wonderful display of the state's culture. I congratulate all participants and performers for putting together such a brilliant display of Naga dance and music. Nagaland is truly enchanting. Anybody who comes here would not want to leave in a hurry. And I would urge tourists coming to this Festival to purchase and take back with them some of the beautiful shawls that this state is so famous for.
6. As I understand, every tribe and community has skilled weavers who specialise in different styles of shawls. Each is a marvel. In a time of machine-made products, Nagaland should justifiably be proud of such traditional, hand-woven shawls. They must reach a much wider market.

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7. The past half-century has been one of both achievements and difficulties for Nagaland. The people of the state have come through many trials, but their essential talent and wisdom, and their essential goodness, has been so apparent. Today Nagaland is at the edge of making history. After years of insurgency, there is hope. With the support of the people of the state, of civil society institutions and all stake-holders, there is an opportunity for lasting peace. I congratulate all the Naga groups for having come so far. I am confident that a final agreement - one that is fair to all and meets the expectations and aspirations of all - will be reached soon.
8. Today there is a government in the state without any opposition. This is a unique situation. It also offers a chance to resolve long-standing political problems, bring lasting peace - and it can accelerate the process of development and of creating jobs and opportunities. Nagaland deserves this; all of you deserve it - and the young people of the state deserve it.
9. The youth of Nagaland are the pride of the country. I see in them a quest and an aspiration to excel and be the best. They are the true legatees of Dr T. Ao, the doctor-sportsperson who was the first captain of our national football team after Independence, leading the team in the London Olympics of 1948. Young people from Nagaland are role models for the rest of India. An illustrious daughter of this state, Temsutula Imsong has won the hearts of the nation for her remarkable work in cleaning the ghats of the river Ganga in Varanasi.
10. Another Naga girl - Chiewelou Thele - was adjudged the best trainee commando in her batch of police officers of Delhi Police. She was the **Poster Girl** for Delhi Police this year. And as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, I must say I am immensely proud of our Naga soldiers and officers. They are among the best we have. They have done the country great service.

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11. The key to Nagaland's development is infrastructure and connectivity projects. These will link Nagaland to new markets, both in India and abroad. That is one of the key goals of the Government of India's Act East Policy and of its thrust for connectivity in the states of the Northeast, including Nagaland.

12. And Nagaland has so much to offer. The strength of the state lies in its organic farm produce, flowers and fruits. Nagaland has rare medicinal plants and herbs that can help create jobs and boost the economy. And I cannot forget to mention **Naga jolokia**, called **King Chilli** locally. This is one of the hottest chilli peppers of the world. We need to bottle it into one of the hottest selling sauces of the world.

13. Nagaland has the potential to be an attractive tourist destination, offering a unique blend of heritage and culture and spectacular natural beauty. Another attribute of society here is the high literacy rate. A young population that is fluent in English, comfortable with Information Technology and forward looking can transport the state and the region into a hub for the services industries of the future.

14. Our country is making great strides in every area - business, trade, education and culture. We are among the world's fastest growing economies. We are also a diverse nation. Our linguistic, ethnic, religious and geographical variety makes India special - and that is our biggest strength. It is an exciting time to be an Indian. And it is an exciting time to be a Naga. Nagaland and the Northeast are central to the India story. Without the development of Nagaland, the development of India will be incomplete.

15. We are entering the Festive Season. In a few weeks, we will celebrate Christmas and march into the New Year. This is a time to be with family and friends. This is time for renewal and resolutions. And this is a time to work for peace and prosperity. Above all, it is a time to fulfil the dreams of the terrific young people of Nagaland.

16. Thank you again for inviting me to this beautiful state - your Nagaland, my Nagaland and our Nagaland. I compliment you once more on the anniversary of Nagaland's statehood. I wish you a happy Hornbill Festival - and a Merry Christmas.

God bless you all!

Thank you

Jai Hind!

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