

### **Manipur CM calls for protection of forest**

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Imphal, Oct 12 (UNI) Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh inaugurated Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Mela, 2022 at Manipur State Film Development Society here on Wednesday and he appreciated the officials of the Forest Department for their dedication and hard work towards saving the forest land of the State. He said that the revival of our forest areas had started. State Government is not against anyone or any particular community, he stated and the Government had taken up various initiatives to preserve the forest for the sake of the whole society and future generations. The Chief Minister recalled that the Van Dhan Yojana was launched nationwide by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 14th April 2018 and was launched in the State on 14th October 2019 to help in transforming the economy of tribal people in the state. The scheme is now able to provide employment directly or indirectly to 41,918 members of various Self-Help Groups, he added. He informed that the Government would try to complete the construction of work shed and storage for minor forest products soon, in consultation with the concerned Department and Officials. N. Biren further mentioned that the State has huge potential and resources which are yet to be explored. If value addition, proper packaging and marketing of forest products can be done, our products can also compete in the international market, he added. He also stressed the need to set up a food processing factory in a suitable place at Imphal. Mentioning that the forest is our life, he stated that the Government had earlier taken the decision of issuing weapons to the Forest Department officials to protect the forest, considering the utmost importance of its preservation. Raising concern on encroachment of Reserve Forest areas for settlement, he warned that legal action would be taken up against officials who unlawfully give recognition and approval for the settlement in Reserve Forest areas. He also assured all possible support from the Government to all Self-Help Groups under various Yojana (PMVDY), 2127 Van Dhan Self-Help Groups had been set up giving benefits to 41,918 members, thereby improving their livelihood. He continued that the State Government had taken up various initiatives for promoting tribal enterprise through value addition, branding and better ways of marketing forest products. The Minister also informed that the Department is planning to open up kiosks of forest produce in every district for improvement in marketing of the produce. He further appealed to the public for their support in the Government initiatives to enhance the development of the State and livelihood of the people. Tribal Affairs and Hills Minister Letpao Haokip stated that the Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana was launched to improve the livelihood of less developed tribal people and generation of employment. Speaking on various development programmes taken up for tribals by the Chief Minister, he appealed to the people to render support and cooperation in development works for timely completion of projects. He also stressed the Chief Minister's desire to carry out terrace cultivation at hill areas, planting horticulture crops and construction of check dams. He continued that planting horticulture crops can aid in achieving self-reliance.

Source: <http://www.uniindia.com/manipur-cm-calls-for-protection-of-forest/east/news/2840451.html>