Today COVID-19 has spread to over 88 countries across the world affecting more than 1 lakh people. Though there is no confirmed case of COVID-19 in Manipur as yet, however given the fact that the virus has affected our country as well with 31 confirmed cases, it is the right time to take utmost precaution for the safety of ourselves, our loved ones and our communities. Manipur shares an international border with Myanmar which itself neighbours China, the country in which the first outbreak of the disease was reported. As we may be aware, one of the modes of transmission of the disease is mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another and through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Therefore, one of the preventive measures to be taken is to avoid participation in large gatherings.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has also issued an Office Memorandum dated 5th March 2020 advising that mass gatherings may be avoided or possibly be postponed till the disease spread is contained.

I am deeply concerned that one of the biggest festivals of Manipur, namely Yaoshang, is around the corner. The celebration of the festival includes playing with colours, thabal chongba, sports events and public functions over a period of 5 days and all of which involve large community gathering and people-to-people contact.

Since safety and health of people is of prime concern, I appeal to the people of my State to avoid such mass gatherings and reduce the scale of the celebration. I take this opportunity to reassure the people of my State that the Government has taken all precautionary and preparatory measures to deal with any eventuality in the event of the outbreak reaching the State.

Let us come together and work to prevent this deadly disease from spreading to ourselves and to our community.