

Women have strength to be voices of peace: Naga activist

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ALIGARH: "Peace matters, regardless of the past," said Rosemary Dzuvichu, director, Women Studies Centre, Nagaland University and advisor of Naga Mothers' Association. Her statement, at the 11th IG Khan Memorial Lecture here indicated that she was investing faith in the strength of women to be voices of peace.

The lecture, on the theme of 'Borders and Social Justice', was organized by the family members of the slain Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) professor IG Khan, under the IG Khan Memorial Trust and Cultural Education Centre at the university. Dzuvichu pointed out how women, despite suffering from violence were committed to peace. "Women have been the worst victims of militarization, suffering rape, murder and violence. Despite everything we have gone through, we women are not talking of anger and hatred. We are talking of peace. All of us, irrespective of borders and boundaries, must learn this language of peace," she said.

The activist was visibly emotional while talking about the dead bodies of youths being denied rightful burial at Churachandpur in Manipur. The youths were killed in violent protests over the passing of the Inner Line Permit bills in the state assembly. "It has been 150 days and their bodies have not been allowed the dignity of burial, which is the right of the dead," Dzuvichu said.

As an advisor of NMA that has 'Shed No More Blood' as its motto, she shared tales of journeys into the jungles of Nagaland and neighboring states urging the leaders of militant factions "to talk - so that peace is maintained". Since the 1997 truce between NSCN-IM and the Centre, NMA has been active in negotiations to settle complex issues. Dzuvichu also talked of the need to provide basic amenities to people living on the margins, including basic healthcare for women, and said that socially-aware citizens needed to go to the grassroots problems, leaving behind their ivory towers. "According to the Human Rights Law Network, there have been 20 PILs filed on the condition of women's health in Nagaland. The anganwadis are being used as storehouses when they should be used to give women good pre and post-natal care," she added.

Dzuvichu also said that gender justice could only come about if men and women worked together as equal partners. "Women must not only get rights as citizens of India, but also dignity and justice through changes in archaic laws," she said.

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