

[Speech of H.E. Gen \(Retd.\) J.J. Singh on the occasion of Nyokum Yullo Festival on 26.02.2008 at Nyokum Lapang Ground, Itanagar](#)

My dear Brothers, sisters and dear children.

I have great pleasure in extending my warm greetings and best wishes to the Nyishi brothers and sisters in particular and people of Arunachal Pradesh as a whole on this auspicious occasion of the Nyokum festival. I came to know that the festival is celebrated annually and blessings from the Deities of Nyokum are solicited through performance of various rituals and sacrifices.

Our festivals and traditions are mirror of our culture, they represent the basic tenets of our people, their social instinct and affinity for group survival. They in totality are the reflection of our forefathers' thought and action long ago. The beauty of Arunachal Pradesh lies in its varied and colorful traditional culture of the tribals who are simple and straightforward. Each major tribe has its own traditional culture and beliefs. They celebrate various colourful festivals alongwith the economic and educational development. The people of Arunachal Pradesh had also come in contact with the people of outside world. As every production has got its byproduct, alongwith the economic and educational development, there has been a tendency by more organized cultures to influence the socio-cultural pattern of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. If such influence is not kept at low ebb during this transitional period there may be a danger of extinction of some of the varied culture and faiths of Arunachalee tribals. This is why steps for rejuvenation and resuscitation of the local traditional culture and beliefs are very important at the moment. Proper appraisal to the tribal people of their

cultural roots and proper realization by themselves of their cultural heritage is necessary.

The festival has a close link with cultivation. The 'Nyokum', goddess of prosperity is invoked for her blessings so that there may be more and more production of food-grains in the next harvesting season, that the visit of famine may be warded off, and that drought or flood may not hamper cultivation, nor should any insect or animal destroy plants or crops. The Goddess is invoked so that the human race may be strengthened and regenerated. All should be free from unnatural death due to accident, war and epidemic. So, it is a festival connected with the worship of the gods for peace, prosperity and happiness for all.

In the past, this ceremony was performed by individual villages to protect the paddy crops, from insects and other natural calamities. Now with the advent of development activities and the spread of education the new generation is searching for an important festival which could be observed as a community festival.

'Ui' or 'Oram Nyokum' is the place meant for the life after death. It is also believed that there are numerous deities and spirits on earth. These are the deities and spirits of mountains, rivers, forests, animals crops, house-hold and so on and so forth. Some of the spirits are benevolent and other are malevolent. The Nyishing believe that human being can live a life of peace and prosperity on this earth only when a perfect harmony is maintained between man, God and nature. They also believe that prosperity and happiness can come to a man when God and nature are pleased. Misery,

hardship and natural calamities like famine, flood, drought earthquake, epidemic, warfare, accidental death and such unwanted incidents occur due to the displeasure and wrath of God and Goddesses of nature. It is, therefore, the Nyishi worship to propitiate the benevolent Gods and Goddesses to protect and bring prosperity to them and to ward off the malevolent spirits from disturbing the peace and tranquility in their life, Nyokum Yullo is one of such propitiations.

Unless children and youth are involved in such festivals and social activities, it would not be possible to disseminate the valuable teachings of indigenous beliefs, ritualistic practices originating from the ancient tribal life and the rich cultural heritage among them. It is believed that festivals are the very soul and essence of socio-cultural identity of a man and therefore, festivals must be essential parts of life of a man for no man can live without social identity. Friends therefore, let us do not confuse among us. Let us continue to strive ahead relentlessly for protection and preservation of our rich cultural heritage and identity. Let us take the advantage of modern education, science and technology from other advanced people, but not at the cost of our precious identity.

The state is passing through a historical period with the Central Government giving topmost priority to the development of the state. The vision of the Government is to elevate Arunachal Pradesh as one of the most developed states of the Union of India in a short period. However, the prosperity of the state cannot be achieved without peace. Therefore I call upon all the young people who took to the path of extremism to come back to the mainstream. The State will soon have a four lane highway, good

roads for 500 villages on the border areas, a railway line from Harmuti and a green field airport in the Capital City. I will specially monitor the projects so that accountability is maintained.

We have huge potential of tourism in our state, therefore, recommendation will be made to the Central Government to streamline the Restricted Area Permit for the foreigners and simplify the Inner Line permit for domestic travellers. Our state can offer tourists diverse and unparalleled experiences with regard to mountaineering , trekking, river rafting and so on. The marvelous natural beauty, varied flora and fauna and tourism potential of the state have been untapped so far. We will endeavour to encourage tourism in a big way by allowing the private sector also to explore this dimension and help in creating the required infrastructure. We need to stress on the health sector and if good hospitals are set up in all the 16 district headquarters that will to a large extent mitigate the sufferings of the people from rural and far flung areas.

We should also stress on the development of educational facilities in the state, especially vocational and higher education. As regards the mega hydel power projects planned in the State concerned authorities have studied all aspects of their effect on human habitation and ecology of the state and as such the ill effects will be very minimal.

The “Nyishi” term, which the tribe has been identified and called themselves since time immemorial ever since they descended from their mythical ancestor “Athu Nyia” son of the great mythical ancestor Aabu Thanyi. The word “Dafla” has been imposed unjustifiably and erroneously

on the Nyishi tribe in the Constitution of India (Schedule Tribes) October 1950 under Article 342 Section (F). The case of substitution of the name “Dafla” by “Nyishi” is under consideration of the Govt. of India and I hope in near future the Constitution amendment will take place to fulfill the long cherished demand of the people of our state.

Today on this festive occasion I could observe how the dream of our first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru taking shape. I would like to recall one of his important remarks, aptly relevant to this celebration
Quote = People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture = Unquote.

Finally, I wish that people pray for peace, prosperity, good health, bountiful food grains and blessings for themselves from the Goddess Nyokum Ane through performances of various sacred rituals on this festive occasion.

Jai Arunachal

Jai Hind