

**SPEECH OF H.E. THE GOVERNOR ON THE OCCASION OF DREE  
FESTIVAL ON 5<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2005.**

I greet all of you on the auspicious and joyous occasion of the Dree Festival. I have been delighted to note that in our gentle and generous Arunachal Pradesh each different tribal group has its own special festivals, but your tradition and culture is unusually cooperative and all the tribal groups celebrate these separate festivals and rituals in a spirit of togetherness. All these festivals celebrate crops and budding of flowers, leaves and food grains in different seasons when our agricultural society wishes to give thanks for nature's bounty to all of us, and pray together for another season of bumper harvests of food grains and cereals produced on our soil in this State.

Our Gods and Goddesses, our evil and good spirits, our mountains and hilltops, the flora and fauna and the forest wealth that is shared by all of us together form part of our rituals, prayers and mantras. Also all the sacrificial offerings we make to various Gods and Goddesses and good spirits of the mountains and forests.

The celebration of Dree in the month of July at a time when paddy plants are young, and lush green, almost immediately after transplantation, reminds us all that it is due to the bounty of the Goddess Dree that we are provided, year after year, century after century, and millennium after millennium adequate amount of food grains. The prayers and rituals also indicate that our ancestors were rightly apprehensive of the hateful & destructive pests and insects capable of damaging crops, even after all the care that our farming community had taken. It is through these prayers and mantras that we learn that the treatment of pests and insects by our ancestors was a highly scientific one, through flooding pests and insects out of the roots of the plants sown by the community. Thus do we maintain our continuity along with the constant change inherent in natural growth and decay.

All of you know about the selected members of the village who are called "Dree Pontang". Also that contributions have to be made in both cash and kind in a

cooperative spirit by all village households in collection of rice in a measure glass called “Dompou Tulla” for preparing the Dree Oh i.e. rice and millets beer used during this festival. The singing of the traditional song ‘Ayu’, sports such as cock fight, high jump, wrestling etc. are also known to all of you better than I can describe these.

Before coming to Arunachal Pradesh I read a lot of literature so as to learn more about our Pradesh and its people. An authoritative auto-biographical Memoir by one of our senior most Civil Servants who was almost the first Indian Administrator of the British period, wrote beautiful things about the Apatanis. He said “The Apatanis are fine cultivators; and it is a joy to see their neatly irrigated fields as the grains ripen. Their plateau was once, according to legend, a deep lake inhabited by strange monsters. One such monster, called by the local people as “BURU” lived in a lake east of the Apatani plateau. Encouraged by the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, and the Daily Mail paper of London an expedition was once despatched to track ‘BURU’ down. But the monster did not appear and lives on in the shadowy world of Legend.”

“Through hard work and skill in cultivation the Apatanis became more prosperous than their other neighbours.”

“Kimin was the base for administering Subansiri Tract or District ..... The path from Kimin to Ziro was a seven day march without proper roads, to the villages of the Apatani plateau..... And it was, therefore, that we decided to move the Apatani administrative centre from Kimin to Ziro. This did us good, helped the Apatani farmers and strengthened the beautiful township of Ziro.”

One more detail that may be of interest to you is that after the Apatanis settled in the Ziro valley around their plateau the first village to perform Dree festival was the village of “Tajang”. Thereafter villages called Duta, Hari, Hija, Mudang Tage

and Michi Bamin followed Tajang's example. Hong was the largest Apatani village to institute the celebration of Dree."

"It was on 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1967 that the entire Apatani valley first celebrated this festival as a community. The Dree had an annual festival for the first time then, and the then administrator of NEFA gave financial help by donating a generous grant of Rs.2000/-. The NEFA Government also gave their full cooperation. The then Nyibu performed the Dree under the suggestions from the then Chief Administrator Shri R.S. Nag."

As we celebrate this festival in the capital of Arunachal Pradesh, Itanagar-Naharlagun township. I consider it necessary to share my thoughts and my pain, and my anxiety, about how little our community has done to beautify and strengthen our functioning as a community in this capital town, which I want to call beautiful, but unfortunately is getting more and more ugly. I shall explain to you what is wanting here and how without your cooperation and initiative, without your exercising your will power and determination nothing and nobody can bring out improvements here.

---