

## Declare by a gazette notification that Gorkhas of Assam are Assamese: GACDC



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Dibrugarh/Dhemaji: Historical, mythological conclusions and anthropological studies have proven Gorkhas to be not just indigenous but also aborigines of the Himalayan mountain range and we are progenies of an aboriginal community so the Government of Assam should soon declare Gorkhas as an indigenous community of Assam through gazette notification and create Gorkha Autonomous Council (GAC) for overall constitutional security and prosperity. This was stated by GACDC chairperson Harka Bahadur Chetry while interacting with media persons on Sunday at Dibrugarh airport on his arrival from New Delhi after receiving the prestigious 'Pillar of Society' international award conferred by an INGO working in the field of social justice domain.

'Gorkhafa' Harka Bahadur Chetry, Chairman of Gorkha Autonomous Council Demand Committee (GACDC) received the 'Pillar of Society' international award for the 2021-22 session, which was conferred on Saturday at the Constitution Club of India, Sansad Marg in New Delhi by Social Justice for International Civil Rights Council (SJFICRC) affiliated to Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)'s civil society of United Nations (UN) and National Anti Crime and Human Rights Council of India (NACHRCOI) recognized by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India for being a crusader for Gorkha community's human and constitutional rights and in social justice domain. Chetry was decorated with an award certificate, citation and a name inscribed medal by SJFICRC International President G Vanneri, India President Md. Shanon Shaikh and Founder Director Dr. Diwas Lama and Sabita Gurung. Chetry thanked the organisation for nominating him for the recognition and expressed gratitude to jury members for deeming him fit for the prestigious award.

‘I dedicate this award to the first martyr of Gorkha Autonomous Council (GAC) Shaheed Birbol Limbu of Golaghat along with the martyrs of Gorkha Ekta Sabha held at Sonitpur. I feel this award is not my personal achievement but a recognition of our struggle for indigenous community status in Assam and the Gorkha Autonomous Council (GAC) movement that was conceived in 1997 when I was the All Assam Gorkha Students’ Union (AAGSU) president. The name of our organisation GACDC is self-explanatory and as its chairman, I am glad and honoured’, added Chetry. Most of his former AAGSU, GACDC colleagues in different associations and unions and counterparts in other community organizations too congratulated Harka Bahadur Chetry for the international award in social justice instituted and given by a reputed INGO in a welcome procession named ‘Respect Rally’ organized by GACDC in association with civil society, community, youths, students and woman organization from Dibrugarh Airport to Moharicamp in Dhemaji. Around 500 people assembled at the airport to welcome their leaders, including his colleagues, family members, friends, and district and regional units of AAGSU and GACDC from Dibrugarh, Sivsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Biswanath and Sonitpur districts along with Bharatiya Gorkha Parisangh (BGP), Assam Gorkha Sammelan (AGS) and Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha (ANSS) leaderships. Rai, Limbu, Mangar, Gurung, Newar, Tamang, Biswakarma, Damai and other community organisations congratulated and felicitated Gorkhafa. Around 60 cars rallied in his hometown Gogamukh where a welcome gate was erected by a local community organisation welcoming their leader. From Gogamukh to Moharicamp to his residence, the caravan was joined by a huge cultural procession which included women and senior citizens playing traditional instruments and shouting slogans ‘We want GAC’, ‘Gorkhas are an indigenous community. The rally with more than a thousand five hundred people concluded with a meeting at Chetry’s residence where he thanked the people for joining the ‘Respect Rally’ and participating in the "Community Reception and Public

Felicitations". At the reception at his home almost all community youths and students' organisations in Assam felicitated and congratulated Gorkhafa. AAGSU general secretary Numal Chetry, who led the delegation for felicitations said, 'Harka Bahadur Chetry is our institution and we congratulate him on this recognition. He is truly a pillar of our society and hence rightly recognised and we are sure he will continue to lead the community and serve the nation with a higher spirit for the larger interest of the society.

In 2016 while the National Register of Citizens (NRC) was being updated and Gorkha's names were being stricken off from NRC assuming them to be from neighbouring nation Nepal instead of being an Original Inhabitant (OI) of Assam, Harka Bahadur Chetry undertook 650 km Marathon March ( Long foot march from Murkungelek Jonai in Dhemaji to Dispur in Guwahati ) in seeking Assamese identity for the Gorkhas stating that Assam Accord cut off year is not applicable on Gorkhas since the community is indigenous of India and not from the specified territory i.e Bangladesh as stated in the accord. This resulted in a one-on-one meeting with the then Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and various departments of the Government of Assam where the then CM proposed bipartite Home & Political Affairs Commissioner & Secretary-level talks between GACDC and Government of Assam on granting indigenous status to Gorkhas of Assam vide Gazette Notification which is still on. After the first bilateral talks, the Department of Home & Political Affairs after taking legal suggestions informed GACDC that the Government of Assam will request the Government of India for tripartite talks since Gorkhas are a nationally present community. The tripartite talks or the submission of data sought during bipartite talks, which GACDC had collected from 'Raithaney Mudda Manthan' at Khanamukh Sonitpur, couldn't take place to date. The whole democratic exercise was known as 'Raithaney Sangram' meaning 'Indigenous Movement'. It was under his leadership dreamt of an autonomous council for Gorkhas when he became president of AAGSU in 1996 and resolved for constitutional safety and security of Gorkhas at its annual conference at Boginadi Higher Secondary School in North Lakhimpur in 1997 for self-determination and indigenous identity of Gorkhas in Assam. The AAGSU after a wide range of consultations with various stakeholders and seminars through a public session formed Special Protected Class Demand Committee (SPCDC) as a parliamentary movement with Dr Harka Bahadur Chetry (Founder president of AAGSU in 1976) as president and Ab Narayan Pathak as

general secretary. It was constituted as an independent political platform of the Gorkhas and it contested assembly election in 2001 with its own flag, constitution and organisational structure. 'Pillar of Society' awardee Harka Bahadur Chetry was elected the president of GACDC in 2003 after he was relieved from AAGSU after the 2002 silver jubilee conference where it was resolved to drop the demand for specially protected class and Gorkha Autonomous Council (GAC) was declared to be AAGSU's fundamental demand. Hence, SPCDC was renamed GACDC to politically pursue the demands of GAC through political dialogue and democratic means. Since then he has been spearheading the GAC movement for the last 20 years with firm determination to achieve GAC on or before its silver jubilee. 56 years old Chetry joined the All Assam Students Union (AASU) in 1981 and led AAGSU as president from 1996 for three consecutive terms until 2002 and has been leading GACDC for 6 consecutive terms since 2003. Son of freedom fighter Late Nar Bahadur Chetry, Gorkhafa, a gold medalist in Anthropology from Dibrugarh University, is one of the most credible, longest serving and active and also one of tallest leaders of Gorkhas in India from Assam.

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