

Report

on

Northeast India Diaspora Meeting

Time: 7 Dec 2013, 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm

Venue: Conference Room, Control Arms Foundation of India, New Delhi-26

Supported by



On 7 Dec 2013, Control Arms Foundation of India, Northeast India Women Initiative for Peace, Manipur Women Gun Survivors Network with support from Heinrich Böll Stiftung, New Delhi organised an interactive event on the theme “Northeast India Diaspora Meeting” at Conference Room, Control Arms Foundation of India, New Delhi-29. The theme of the meeting was to bridge gaps between the much conflict affected Northeast India and the rest of the country for bringing peace, development and social justice. As a part of the event, the film titled “The Only Real Game”, Winner of Best Documentary Film 2013 at the New York Indian Film Festival was screened. The film is on Manipur made with helped and support from Northeast India Diaspora.



Pic: Participants at the event

The meeting began with the introductory speech by Ms Binalakshmi Nepram, Secretary General, Control Arms Foundation of India, welcoming the participants of the event. It was an open discussion with Northeast Diaspora participants gave their thoughtful insights about grim situation that prevail back in different states of the Northeast region. The participants were divided into groups and had to showcase through their respective charts the problems that are persistent in their region and how they could resolve them. All the groups participated with great enthusiasm and made nice flow charts describing about their life circumstances and resolutions for bridging a gap between northeast and the rest of India.

It was accepted by all participants that Diaspora Youth can play a significant role in achieving peace and development in the region. One participant also claimed that if youth come together, it will be a faster process of overall integration. Social service and working with NGOs as claimed by one group can be helpful in reaching out to the underprivileged sections who bear the brunt of violence in conflict affected areas.

Ms Binalakshmi believed that in order to bridge the gap between northeast and mainstream society, it is immensely important to know each other's lifestyles and cultures. Thus, sharing history, stories, works of art, pictures, films, literature, cuisine and music can make a lot of difference and help in reviewing presumptions they had of each other. Politics too, as another participant group conceded, is a strong tool as them, if come together in large numbers could act as a pressure groups on government officials and political leaders. Since Delhi is a hub of peace talks, she said that we must use this place as the opportunity to initiate peace talks and dialogue with insurgents to allow peace.

Ms Felicita Songvah, Chairperson of Tangkhul Shanao Long Delhi stated that the Northeasterners living and working in different parts of India always felt alienated in their own country with frequent remarks on the question of their Nationality and putting derogatory remarks like calling them "Chinkis". She stated that it was high time for mainland Indians to accept and embrace the cultural differences for maintaining peace and development in India. Ms Gitanjali More, Programme Coordinator of Heinrich Böll Stiftung pointed out that it was also important as highlighted by Mr Karma Palzor (a renowned name in media from Northeast India who is currently the Business Editor at CNN IBN, Network 18) in his statement in the earlier HBF CAFI Diaspora event 2012 that Northeast Indian community must leave its self-created ghettos in the metropolitan cities of India and to start interacting more with the people of their host-region. Mr Karma Palzor represents one of the positive cases of the Northeast Indian Diaspora who managed to ignore the racist insults and just made a good life for himself by engaging with the local people where he was studying.

At the end of the discussion, it was accepted that peace is a two way process which means that mainstream Indian should take efforts to know and accept the differences and vice versa. The fact that mainlanders ignore the northeast, conflicts arise and continue to grow aggravating the situation further which is causing migration of people to other parts of the country and the world today. It is the need of the hour that government should recognize the region as well as other international bodies like UN who can play a greater in peace building and development of the region and sadly which was not done so far because it was still considered a troubled region.

The film "The Only Real Game" that was screened at the end of the event showed ways how to combat conflict, HIV and drug addiction by engaging people to actively participate in sports which in turn help in bringing peace, health and development in Manipur. The meeting ended successfully and was participated by Northeast India diaspora students and professionals.

For more information, please contact office of Control Arms Foundation of India, B5/146, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi-29, www.cafi.online.org