



## **Roles of Assam Nagaland Joint Peace Committee, Merapani Circle in Border area**

**Bidur Kumar Boruah**  
**Principal, Doyang Junior College,**  
**Merapani, Golaghat, Assam (India)**

**ABSTRACT :** *Merapani of Golaghat district of Assam, India generally occupied headlines in newspapers due to conflict between the Assamese and the Nagas, due to its boundary dispute between the two states. But Assam -Nagaland joint Peace Committee played an important role to maintain peace and friendship in the area. In 1985, The Armed Polices of both states were involved in armed Conflict at Merapani. In the conflict several policemen of both the states including civilians had to lose their lives, several Assamese villages were burnt down at the Merapani area of “D” sector Golaghat Assam. These created misunderstandings and broke the friendship between the people of both states. But Assam Nagaland Joint peace Committee, Merapani circle (briefly called -JPC Merapani ) paved the way for Peace and progress in the area it was regarded as the model agency in the entire Assam -Nagaland Border area to restore peace and harmony.*

**Keywords:** *Administration, Development, Dovernment, Friendship, Neautal force*

### **I. Introduction:**

Due to Armed Conflict, 1985 and the aggressive attitude of the people of both neighboring states, the Merapani area became very sensitive. Both of them tried to encroach on land in the area. As per the mutual agreement of the Government of both, states armed police were withdrawn in 1985, central Neutral Force was deployed there to maintain law and order in the area. Status-quo was maintained strictly no construction and development work was allowed in the area. It was declared as DAB (Disputed Area Belt ). The people of the border area had to suffer in the field of their basic needs. They were not allowed to construct an extension of their dwelling house. Central Neutral Force was empowered not to allow to construct any permanent building either personally or officially in DAB. The people of the area were deprived of new road connections, electricity, school, water supply even health service. But the people of the border area had to repair and reconstruct their dwellings houses due to its damaged conditions, they had to construct roads and other buildings to fulfill their basic needs. On the other hand, the Central Neutral force obstructed that to do so. Several times, common



people were Physically punished by the Central Neutral force due to violation of the status quo in DAB. It brought an unfriendly environment between the Central Neutral Force and the public of Merapani in the Assam-Nagaland Border area.

On the other hand, individual clashes took place between the public of Assam and Nagaland for individual cases. The anti-Social element was always active in DAB. It instigated clashes between the Nagas and the Assamese. Such types of activities brought critical law and order situations in the Assam-Nagaland border area.

But the new generation and common people of both states stood in favor of the restoration of peace and progress in the area. So, they came forward to work jointly to build up friendly relations and avoid clashes among them. At that time, 84 Battalion of Central Reserve Police Force worked as Central Neutral Force in the area. Commanding Officer of the Battalion U.K Dutta encouraged the people to come forward to work for Peace and progress in the area. On 28<sup>th</sup> October 2000, a meeting of a representative of Assamese and Nagas was arranged at Sector headquarter of CRPF at Merapani. The meeting formed “Assam -Nagaland Joint Peace Committee, Merapani circle “ (JPC). The main objectives of the Committee were -

- i) The Committee would work to build up friendly relations between Assamese and Nagas at the grass-root level.
- ii) The Committee would try to find out an amicable settlement of the individual clashes between Nagas and Assamese.
- iii) The committee would cooperate administration to maintain peace and harmony area.
- iv) The committee would try to pave the way for Progress and development in the area.

The Assam-Nagaland Joint Peace Committee. Assam side was led by Nogen Das, one of the senior Social workers of the area, and the Nagaland side was led by I.Wati Ao, a retired IAS officer of Nagaland. The Committee tried to bring a positive environment to the area.

## **II. Review of Literature:**

Assam -Nagaland Border Conflict in Foothills of Golaghat district (a Case study ) of Antora Bora is a faithful work to study Naga -Assamese relations especially in Foothills area of Golaghat district. The book deals with the economic relations between the two. The book also



emphasizes the involvement of females in the Foothills area of Golaghat district. The book describes the activities of the medical and health sector in the Foothills area of the Assam-Nagaland Border. But the book does not pay attention to the activities of the Peace workers of the area. Assam-Nagaland Joint Peace Committee played an important role to pave the way for friendship, Peace, and progress between Assamese and Nagas.

Conflict mapping and Peace Process in North- East India; Edited by Lazar Jeyaseelan is one of the important books to study Naga Assamese relations. The economic factors which impact the relations, the various taxes imposed by the Naga Militant group in the Assam-Nagaland border area is discussed in the book. The roles of the non Political organization like - All Assam Student Union (AASU) of the local unit, Krikkhak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS), All Bodo Student Union (ABSU) of Assam side, and Naga Student Federation, Lotha Hoho of Nagaland side were discussed in the book. But the book does not discuss broadly the activities of Assam -Nagaland Joint Peace Committee, Merapani Circle. It covers only a few activities of the Peace Committee. As the committee played important role in Economics relations, cultural relations, and Socio-Political relations between the people of both states.

### **III. Objectives:**

- i) To understand the importance of people peoples contact at the grassroots level to maintain Peace and harmony between Assam and Nagaland.
- ii) To make the people conscious about Peace and friendship to carry on progress and development.
- iii) To know about the roles of the Peace workers( Peace Makers ) to maintain interstate cooperation and Peaceful coexistence.

**IV. Area of the Study:-** Merapani subdivision of Golaghat district Assam and Bhandari subdivision of Wokha district Nagaland is the area of the study.

### **V. Methodology:**

The methodology of the study was used mostly Historical and the incident was studied in a Chronological way with intermittent use of the Analytical method. A lot of fieldwork was



done and traveled to various places of the Assam-Nagaland border to talk with the leading person involved in Peace Process as Peacemakers in the Assam-Nagaland border, especially in the Golaghat district, Assam and Wokha district, Nagaland.

## **VI. Hypothesis:**

1. The work will try to show that Assam -Nagaland Joint Peace Committee, Merapani circle play an important role to maintain Peace and Progress in the Assam-Nagaland border area.
2. An attempt will be made to show that the Assam-Nagaland Joint Peace Committee, Merapani circle helps to maintain people-to-people contact at the grass-root level in the sensitive Assam- Nagaland border area to build up friendship and faith between the Assamese and Nagas.

## **VII. Discussion:**

After the armed conflict at Merapani in 1985, friendly relations between Assamese and Naga came to end. Feelings of enemy and hate came to the mind of peoples of the localities in the Assam -Nagaland Border area, especially in Merapani. In 1988 the Government of Assam filed a “Civil suit No-.2 /1988 “ in the Supreme court of India against the Government of India and the Government of Nagaland. And appealed to settle the Assam-Nagaland Boundary problems based on the Constitution of India. Thus the Assam -Nagaland Border Disputes came under Judicial Jurisdiction and the Central Neutral Force was authorized to strictly maintain status-quo in the area. It hampered progress and development in the area. To sort out the local problem Assam -Nagaland joint Peace Committee, Merapani circle was formed at Merapani, in the presence of Commanding Officer 84 Bn CRPF on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2000. The 20 representatives from each side participated in the meeting. The meeting had decided that the Deputy Commissioner of the respective district had to approve the own committee. Thus, the Deputy Commissioner of Wokha and Golaghat approved the committee. But Assam-Nagaland Joint Peace Committee was a purely non-government and voluntary organization. It represented the wills of the people of the Assam-Nagaland Border area (Merapani circle ). The district administration of the concerned district of both states had approved the committee on request of the representatives of the localities. Deputy Commissioner Golaghat Assam addressed in his approval letter as following way - “ In inviting a reference to the above, I am



to inform you that the Assam-Nagaland Joint Peace committee formed at Merapani as per the decision of the meeting held on 28-10-2000 between the representatives of Assamese and Nagas of localities of Merapani circle is approved as prayed for by you. “ (Approval letter of Deputy Commissioner Golaghat Assam ).

Major achievements of Assam-Nagaland Joint Peace Committee Merapani circle

### **Relations with the media:**

Several Assamese newspapers published fake news that the Nagas placed many attacks upon the Assamese people at Merapani and they came forward to forcefully encroached land in Assamese habitation. Such type of fake news brought unnecessary tension in the societies and threaten peace. On 9<sup>th</sup> June 2001, in the history of Assamese-Nagas relations, for the first time, a joint meeting of both communities expressed reaction against the fake news, to develop friendship and maintain the normal situation in the area. Nagen Das, President of Assam-Nagaland Joint peace Committee Merapani Circle (Assam side) stated in a press note -“ The meeting of Assam Nagaland Joint Peace Committee Merapani Circle has appealed the news editors of Assamese newspaper not to publish any news without spot inquiry in connection of sensitive Assam Nagaland Border area. As it obstructs development-friendly relations between the two and hampers progress and development in the area. “ (Press release, dated -10/6/2001 ). The Assamese media always published news against the Nagas. They always instigated government and people against the Nagas. In this connection, they had not faced any obstruction. But “the Assam -Nagaland Joint Peace Committee Merapani circle appealed to them to change their outlook. And J.P.C adopted all possible measures to compel the media to show the real pictures of the border area. It was regarded as one of the major achievements of the Assam -Nagaland Joint Peace Committee. “ (Nagen Bora, President Merapani Journalist Association, express his view in Eastern Traditional Cultural Festival Merapani, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2014 ).

### **Role of Assam-Nagaland Joint Peace Committee, Merapani circle and development works:**

It was seen that before the formation of Assam-Nagaland Joint peace Committee, Merapani circle if any side forward to start any development work in DAB, the counterpart always lodged complain against it and compelled the CRPF (As Central Neutral Force) to take



a step against it and compelled them to strictly execute status quo in the area. The non - Political organization and media compelled their administration to pressure CRPF to use force to stop it. Department of power, the government of Nagaland took scheme for electrification at Baluguri area of DAB where several Nagas families lived but were deprived of electricity. But the various organizations on the Assam side opposed it. On the other hand, a scheme to set up a landline for telephone connection was launched from Assam sides at Merapani. The Nagaland side opposed it and was compelled to stop. In the same way, the border administration of Nagaland opposed road construction at Bhelowguri near Merapani, the establishment of Anganbadi Kendra in the various part of DAB. JPC Merapani came forward to make barrier-free fields for development activities. In its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2002, adopted resolution following way -“Regarding the development works of the area of both side of Assam and Nagaland. The meeting has adopted a resolution that no complaint will be placed for the same. The development in the field of basic needs will always be welcomed by JPC. This resolution has been adopted with Mutual understanding by members of both sides. “ (Resolution of JPC Meeting, date- 27/3/2002 ). But the district administration of the concerned district did not respond positively. So, on 06.07.2002 JPC adopted the following resolutions:-

1. The JPC would like to request both BM's and sector commandant CRPF Merapani to allow the development works at Merapani area, due to most of the public interest.
2. Previously the JPC had adopted a resolution regarding development work in the field of basic needs. Out of these the JPC especially would like to appeal the BM's of both sides to allow for the execution of the pending works of Telephone and electricity in the locality of Merapani and Foothills.
3. The JPC would like to appeal to hold an MLA level meeting between the honorable MLA Golaghat and Bhandari. “.

Thus, Assam -Nagaland Joint Peace Committee Merapani, circle adopted all required measures to compel the district administration Golaghat district Assam and Wokha district Nagaland to come forward to carry on development work in the backward border area. Due to the rapid pressurization of the Assam-Nagaland Joint Peace Committee Merapani circle Deputy Commissioner level meeting was held and both the parties agreed to allow pending work of electrification and telephone connection. Later on, this decision was approved by the



government of Assam and the Government of Nagaland. Thus the JPC, Merapani was able to bring a new beginning of peace, friendship, progress in DAB.

### **Assam-Nagaland Joint peace committee (JPC) Merapani circle as role model in the Assam-Nagaland Border area:**

Due to the creative outlook and positive activities, the JPC Merapani was able to influence the other part of the Assam-Nagaland border area. All the district administrations of the adjoining area to the Assam-Nagaland border came forward to constitute such committee in the bordering area of their Jurisdiction. Thus, the following Peace committee was formed -

1. Border Peace Committee - Namtula, Sivsagarh district.
2. Border Peace Committee- Geleki, Sivsagarh district
3. Border Peace Committee -Amguri, Sivsagarh district.
4. Joint Peace Committee-Desoi valley, Jorhat district.
5. Border Peace Committee - Morioni, Jorhat district.
6. Border Peace Committee - Nagabat , Jorhat district.
7. Border Peace Committee - Uriamghat, Golaghat district.
8. Border Peace Committee, Bukajan, Karbianglong district.

All these Peace Committees worked in their jurisdictions for peace and progress.

### **Co-Mediators and border Peace Committee:**

As the government of Assam filed a civil suit before the Supreme court of India in connection with Assam -Nagaland boundary dispute, in 1988. The Supreme court of India vide its order dated-20/8/2010 appointed two Co- Mediators -Shri Shriram Pancho, Senior advocate, High Court of Madras at Chennai, and Mr. Niranjan Bhatt, senior advocate, High Court of Gujrat at Ahmedabad to mediate on the border dispute between Assam and Nagaland. The Co-Mediators instructed the government of Assam and Nagaland to adopt a policy for people to people contact at the grass-root level. In this connection Assam- Nagaland Joint Peace Committee Merapani circle was taken as a role model and the border Peace Committee was formed in the entire Assam- Nagaland Border area. In the direct interference of the co-Mediators, Border Peace Coordination Committee (BPCC) was constituted. On, 21st June 2013, at Dimapur, the three days meetings of BPCC was started, in the presence and guidance of the two Co-Mediators and the Chief Secretary of the government of Nagaland inaugurated the meeting, all the Deputy Commissioners, Superintend of Police of the bordering districts



of both states participated in the meeting. 51 no delegates of the border Peace committees of Assam and Nagaland participated in the meeting. The meeting adopted resolutions-

1. To maintain the status quo in connection with land encroachment.
2. To appeal to the governments to take a step for economic development in the border area including infrastructure, electricity, transport, education, and healthcare.
3. The meeting requests that there should be joint and cooperative economic programs and initiatives including manufacturing and rural-based industries using resources of both states. States governments together should mutually discuss to identify border areas for common development. This may be considered optionally on a sector-wise basis.

Thus, The BPCC adopted several resolutions to build up peace and friendship, faith and confidence, Progress and development in the Assam-Nagaland Border area. Assam Nagaland Joint Peace Committee, Merapani circle played major roles in the BPCC meeting, Dimapur, to adopt resolutions in favor of peace and progress.

JPC Merapani played roles to settle individual and group clashes:-

Sometimes, Assamese and Nagas are involved in individual clashes and group clashes, individual land disputed cases in the border area. Earlier, these types of incidents were colored as the clashes between Assamese and Nagas or Assam and Nagaland. It created an environment of tension and suspicion between the two communities. But JPC Merapani was able to create awareness among the people and adopted all the possible steps to make an amicable settlement through mutual discussion on all such types of clashes.

“We the peacemakers of Assam-Nagaland Joint Peace Committee create a friendly atmosphere in our area which encourages the new generation to avoid clashes between Assamese and Nagas. Our all kind of clashes can be made amicable settlement without using any force . “(Y. Muji, Chairman, village council Merapani ,Foothills Nagaland stated in the meeting of Assam-Nagaland Joint Peace Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2004).

### **VIII. Summary and Conclusion:**

Assam -Nagaland Joint Peace Committee Merapani circle (JPC), became a role model not only for other border peace committees of the Assam-Nagaland border area but also encouraged all other non-government and non -political organizations to work for peace and progress in the area. The atmosphere encouraged “The Doyang -the Sunshine “(a socio-



economic & cultural organization ) of Golaghat district Assam and Kyong Student union Wokha, Nagaland to celebrate a traditional and Cultural festival comprising dances of different North- Eastern tribes at Merapani on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2014. Thus, JPC, Merapani was able to open the door for cultural exchange between the two.

JPC Merapani was able to change the attitudes of the media and the mindsets of the common people. Before the formation of JPC, they had instigated and provoked to take a negative step against each other. But JPC Merapani was able to create the atmosphere to encourage work for economic development, cultural exchange, improvement of Socio-Political, and trade and commerce between the two. It helped Nagaland to set a huge market at the National level to supply rural and agricultural products and the Assamese people also set up a huge market of essential commodities in Naga hills. It bought the feelings of Nationalism and brotherhood.

## References

### *Primary source*

- [1] Resolutions of the Assam-Nagaland joint peace committee Merapani, circle, dated- 09/06/2001, 27/03/2002, 08/07/2002 , 03/08/2004 .
- [2] Record of Merapani Bazar Committee , Golaghat ,Assam
- [3] Record of the village Council, Foothills, Nagaland.
- [4] Record of the Merapani Goan Panchayat, Golaghat, Assam.
- [5] Minutes of Border Magistrate Level's meetings, at D-sector , Merapani.
- [6] Minutes of Border Peace Coordination Committee, Dimapur , Nagaland dated -22/06/2013.

### *Secondary sources*

#### English books

- [7] Thengal Rajiv, Assam-Nagaland Border Dispute causes and Responses , M.R Publication, Panbazar Guwahati 1 , (2017).
- [8] Bora . Antora , Assam-Nagaland border conflict of Golaghat district (a case study) LAP Lambert Academic Publication , Guwahati 2013.
- [9] Jeyaseelam .Lazar; (edited) Conflict Mapping and Peace Process in North-East India , North -East Social Research Centre, Guwahati.

#### Assamese books

- [10] Goswami . Radhika Ballav ; Naga Asomiya Samparkar , Sanghat , Sangharsha aru Sampriti ; Eastern Reader Publication, Guwahati-2017.

### *Souvenir*

- [11] The Sunshine Eastern Traditional Cultural Festival Merapani, 15<sup>th</sup> March , 2014 ; Published by Celebration Committee , Eastern Traditional Cultural Festival , 2014

Photo Page:



Meeting of Assam-Nagaland joint peace committee Merapani circle



Eastern Traditional Cultural Festival at Merapani- 2014



Co-Mediators appointed by S.C, visited Merapani to talk with J.P.C