



15th ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF CHINA STUDIES (AICCS)

SPECIAL THEME: *Connected Geographies and Cultural Interfaces*

VIRTUAL MODE

● 17-19 November 2022 ●

Organised by

**INSTITUTE OF CHINESE STUDIES, NEW DELHI
& INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
GUWAHATI**

in cooperation with

**GAUHATI UNIVERSITY & OMEO KUMAR DAS
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL CHANGE AND
DEVELOPMENT**

in partnership with

INDIA OFFICE, KONRAD-ADENAUER-STIFTUNG

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

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ABOUT ALL INDIA CONFERENCE OF CHINA STUDIES (AICCS)

Convened annually since 2006, the **All India Conference of China Studies (AICCS)** is the flagship event of the ICS; it is meant to generate interest in and strengthen research on China studies in India. The conference showcases a survey of recent scholarship in different aspects of China Studies and has a special theme each year. AICCS promotes active networking among scholars; apart from participation of eminent scholars, the conference provides a platform to young scholars for presenting ongoing research. Each year, the best original paper presented by a young scholar is selected for the [*Mira Sinha-Bhattacharjea Award*](#), in memory of one of the finest Indian scholars of Chinese studies.

As a pan-Indian outreach initiative, the previous editions of AICCS have been held in Delhi (2006 and 2009), Jadavpur University (2010), Central University of Hyderabad (2011), Visva-Bharati University (2012, 2021), IIM Kozhikode (2013), Banaras Hindu University (2014), Sikkim University (2015), University of Mumbai (2016), Goa University (2017), CHRIST University (2018), O.P. Jindal Global University (2019), China Studies Centre, IIT Madras (2021) and IIT Guwahati (2022).

CONCEPT NOTE

China has been the centre of scholarly attention for long, though the nature and reason of the interest may have changed as China moved through its long history. In the last century alone, the reasons for observing and studying China have changed as it witnessed transformational change both in the way it was perceived by others and the way it viewed itself. It is well-known that in the decades since the establishment of the People's Republic of China, some countries of the West have had several Centres and Institutes dedicated to the study and research of China. India, on the other hand, has had many limitations in its efforts to study China, in spite of the fact that India and China have shared a civilizational interaction for centuries. Yet, progress made since the turn of the twenty-first century has been extremely encouraging, with two new generations of China scholars coming to maturity and producing works on a wide range of themes. Moreover, many of these scholars have achieved commendable competence in Chinese language, enabling them to use primary source materials that are much more readily available compared to a few decades back. Subsequently, some of the existing areas of research have been strengthened, but more importantly, new areas of interest and importance have been identified and ventured into. The body of research emerging out of our centers of China Studies have two points of departure compared to the past; first, it is becoming more and more interdisciplinary, and secondly, it is taking ample advantage of the abundant primary source material and language competence available today. While much discussion is taking place all over the world on the trajectory of China's development, an important aspect of the research on China today is that more and more archival material is becoming accessible resulting in questioning of well-established formulations on the strength of theoretical and methodological rigor. No less important are the propelling forces that have shaped discourse and debates on China, namely Marxist thought, the Chinese nationalist movement, civilizational discourse, the evolution of the Communist Party of China (CPC), political accountability, and social stratification and cultural diversity and so on.

Given this background, the 15th AICCS had the following three components:

Part I: China Studies: State of the Field

- a. Global Trends in China Studies
- b. New Scholarship in China

This part included areas such as foreign policy and strategy, economic development, domestic politics and challenges of governance, dynamics of society and culture, environmental concerns, food and energy security, and so on.

Part II: New Research on China in India

In the last decade, AICCS has witnessed a steady and significant increase in the number of enthusiastic young scholars, especially M.Phil/Ph.D students, wishing to share their research; an extremely welcome trend, this would enhance interactions as much between themselves as with the senior scholars of China Studies who have set the benchmark for academic research and continue to do so through mentoring. As in recent years, it is in this section that new horizons of Indian scholarship on China were displayed in all its diversity and originality.

Part III: Special Theme: Connected Geographies and Cultural Interfaces

North-eastern part of India is regarded by scholars as a strategic link between South, South East and East Asia, sharing common geographical features and development objectives. From the ancient period, interaction in this region has had the civilizational framework at its foundation. Part of the once-thriving southern silk route, this region is often conceptualized as a cultural region, characterized by ethnic affinities and historical interaction between different communities, Himalayan ecologies, shared level of relative deprivation, and so on. Guwahati, the location for the 15th AICCS, is an important city of this region; on one hand, as a prominent centre of historical and modern relevance, it has witnessed rich people-to-people interactions in the realms of culture, and on the other, it represents the aspirations and anxieties of enormous geo-strategic significance of the area as perceived through the lens of contemporary geo-political considerations. Therefore, the theme of *Connected Geographies and Cultural Interfaces*, which reflects all these scholarly concerns, was the Special Theme this year.

The Conference was arranged into Thematic Panels, composed of the selected abstracts/papers of individual scholars (through Call for Papers), and Special Panels, composed of selected panel proposals (through Call for Papers), as well as invited panels.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DAY 1: THURSDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 2022

INAUGURAL SESSION

0930 – 1100 Hours

Welcome Remarks: Alka Acharya, Honorary Director, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi and Professor, Centre for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Remarks: Adrian Haack, Director, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, New Delhi.

Opening Remarks: T. G. Sitharam, Director, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati.

Convener's Remarks: Sabaree Mitra, Convener, 15th AICCS; Professor, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Remarks: Sukanya Sharma, Head of Department, Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati.

Keynote Address: Prasenjit Duara, Oscar L. Tang Professor of East Asian Studies and Director, Global Asia Initiative, History Department, Duke University, North Carolina.

China and Southeast Asia: A Contemporary History

Vote of Thanks: Pahi Saikia, Co-Convener, 15th AICCS; Associate Professor of Political Science, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati.

1100 – 1115 Hours: BREAK

SPECIAL PANEL I: STATE OF CHINA STUDIES IN INDIA

1115 – 1300 Hours

Chair: Manoranjan Mohanty, Emeritus Fellow and former Chairperson, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; Distinguished Professor, Council of Social Development, New Delhi; former Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi.

Speakers:

G. Venkat Raman, Professor, Humanities & Social Sciences Area, Indian Institute of Management Indore; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

The Challenges of Studying China: Making a Case for Cautious Optimism

Usha Chandran, Assistant Professor, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Raj Gupta, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Relevance of Chinese Language in China Studies in India

Aravind Yelery, Senior Research Fellow, Peking University, Beijing/Shenzhen; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Reassessment of Methods and Tools of Research in Area Studies: Exploring the Inflection Points of Accessibility and Efficacy of Technological Tools

Rityusha Mani Tiwary, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi; Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

The State of China Studies in India: Of Methodological and Disciplinary Boundaries

1300 – 1400 Hours: BREAK

THEMATIC PANEL I: NORTHEAST INDIA & TRANS-HIMALAYAN
CONNECTIONS: CULTURE & TRADE

1400 – 1530 Hours

Chair: Patricia Uberoi, Emeritus Fellow and former Chairperson, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Speakers:

Mayongam Muinao, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Political Science, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong.

Re-inventing the North East India Trans-Himalaya Trading Route in the Height of Indo-China Relation: Challenges and Prospects

Mathew Thongminlal, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Cultural and Trade Route Linkage between China-Myanmar-India: A Study of Frontier/Cross Border Tribe Jingpo-Kachin-Singpho

Jigme Yeshe Lama, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta, Kolkata.

(Dis)Connections, Residues and Tibetan Buddhism in the Eastern Himalayas

Discussant: Samir Kumar Das, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta, Kolkata; former Vice-Chancellor, University of North Bengal, Siliguri.

1530 – 1545 Hours: BREAK

SPECIAL LECTURE I

1545 – 1645 Hours

Chair: Kamal Sheel, Professor (Retired) of Chinese, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Madhavi Thampi, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi and former Associate Professor, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi.

World War II: The Crucible of Modern Sino-Indian Relations?

DAY 2: FRIDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2022

SPECIAL PANEL II: INSTITUTIONAL INTERFACES AND INFORMAL HISTORIES
IN THE HIMALAYAN CONTACT ZONE

1100 – 1245 Hours

Chair: Mahendra P. Lama, Professor, Centre for South Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; former Vice-Chancellor, Sikkim University, Gangtok.

Speakers:

Swati Chawla, Associate Professor of History, Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, O.P Jindal Global University, Sonipat.

The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology and Sikkim's Resistance to Merger with India

Aniket Alam, Associate Professor, Human Sciences Research Group, Centre for Exact Humanities, IIIT-Hyderabad.

Oral History of Border Making in the Western Himalayas in the 20th Century

Sanjukta Datta, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Ashoka University, Sonipat.

Across the Himalayas: Magadha's Buddhist Networks (c. 5–15th centuries CE)

Sayantani Mukherjee, Assistant Professor, Department of History and Ashoka Centre for China Studies, Ashoka University, Sonipat.

An Expert in the Field: Native Surveyors and the Cartographic Creation of Tibet, 1860-1904

Swargajyoti Gohain, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ashoka University, Sonipat.

Institutional Networks and the Forging of Indian Himalayan Solidarity

1245 – 1400 Hours: BREAK

THEMATIC PANEL II: NORTHEAST INDIA & CHINA: CULTURAL &
EDUCATIONAL INTERFACES

1400 – 1530 Hours

Chair: Avijit Banerjee, Professor, Cheena Bhavana, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan;
Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Speakers:

Daveirou Lanamai, Assistant Professor (Chinese), Department of Foreign Languages, Tezpur University.

Influence of Chinese Vloggers in Northeast India: A Study on the Vlogs of Li Ziqi and Dianxi Xiaoge

Ningshen Zingjarwon, M.Phil, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Tracing Folk Ideas and Worldview in Folktales: A Comparative Analysis of Some Chinese Ethnic Minorities and the Meiteis of Manipur

Shyamkumar Ningthoujam, Guest Faculty, Department of Foreign Languages, Manipur University, Imphal.

Chinese Language Education in India's Northeast Region: Opportunities and Challenges

Discussant: M. Sadananda Singh, Assistant Professor, Department of Manipuri, DM College of Arts, Dhanamanjuri University, Imphal; former Visiting Fellow, University of Missouri.

1530 – 1545 Hours: BREAK

THEMATIC PANEL III: CHINA, INDIA & SOUTHEAST ASIA: POLICIES & PERSPECTIVES

1545 – 1715 Hours

Chair: Ashok K. Kantha, Honorary Fellow and former Director, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; former Ambassador of India to China.

Speakers:

Dickey Lama, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Women's College, Calcutta, Kolkata.

Tianxia and Kyaukpyu: Spheres of Influence and connection between China and Myanmar

Shruti Dey, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Politics & International Studies, School of Social Sciences & International Studies, Pondicherry University.

China's Rise and the Hedging Strategies of India and Vietnam in Perspective

Swagata Saha, Doctoral Candidate, School of International Studies, Symbiosis International (Deemed) University, Pune.

Sukalpa Chakrabarti, Deputy Director and Associate Professor (IR & Public Policy), School of International Studies, Symbiosis International (Deemed) University, Pune.

The 'Pauk-Phaw' Factor in India's Act East Policy

Discussant: Manorama Sharma, Professor (Retd.), Department of History, North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong; Academic Adviser, Assam Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research, Guwahati.

1715 – 1800 Hours: BREAK

SPECIAL LECTURE II

1800 – 1900 Hours

Chair: Rashmi Doraiswamy, Professor, MMAJ Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi and Recipient of the National Best Film Critic Award (1994).

Lu Xiaoning, Reader in Modern Chinese Culture and Language, [SOAS China Institute](#), SOAS University of London.

Mobile Attraction: Travelling Film Projectionists and Rural Cinema Exhibition in Mao's China

DAY 3: SATURDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2022

SPECIAL PANEL III: GEOPOLITICS OF TRANSBORDER WATERS

1000 – 1130 Hours

Chair: Nimmi Kurian, Professor, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi.

Speakers:

Ruth Gamble, Senior Lecturer, History, Department of Archaeology and History, La Trobe University, Victoria.

China's Yarlung Tsangpo Challenge: Balancing Green Power, Biodiversity Protection, Geopolitics, and Indigenous Rights

Douglas Hill, Associate Professor, School of Geography-Te Iho Whenua, University of Otago, Dunedin.

Contesting the Imagined Geographies of the Yarlung Tsangpo-Brahmaputra basin

Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman, Programme Coordinator and Research Associate, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, New Delhi and Visiting Research Associate, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Materializing and Embedding Concrete Borders in Transboundary Himalayan River Basins

1130 – 1145 Hours: BREAK

THEMATIC PANEL IV: CHINA'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS: TRADE & FOREIGN
AID

1145 – 1315 Hours

Chair: Biswajit Dhar, Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Speakers:

Sharmistha Hazra, Doctoral Candidate (Politics and International Relations), School of Liberal Studies, Pandit Deendayal Energy University, Gandhinagar.

China's Strategic Presence in Three East African Ports: Implications for Indo-Pacific Security in the Western Indian Ocean

Jasveer Singh, Doctoral Candidate (Diplomacy and Disarmament Division), Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Decoding China's Foreign Aid Policy: The Case of Pacific Island Countries

Khanindra Ch. Das, Assistant Professor (Economics), Birla Institute of Management Technology, Greater Noida.

Growth of Cereals Trade between India and China: What it means for Food Security?

Discussants:

Panu Pazo, Assistant Professor and Head of Department, Department of Political Science, Sikkim Government College, Namchi.

Deepak Kumar Bhaskar, Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Department of Political Science, Nagaland University, Lumami HQRS.

1315 – 1430 Hours: BREAK

THEMATIC PANEL V: CHINESE DISCOURSE & PRAXIS

1430 – 1600 Hours

Chair: Akhil Ranjan Dutta, Professor, Department of Political Science, Gauhati University, Guwahati.

Speakers:

Priyanka Keshry, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Ah Q, Ah Qism in China's IR Discourse: Focus on India

Cherry Hitkari, PG Intensive Advanced Diploma in Chinese Language (CF-2), Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi.

Rocking the Cradle, Ruling the World: Crafting the Ideal Citizen through Children's Songs in the People's Republic of China

Prahlad Kumar Singh, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Military-Civil Fusion in China: A Case Study under Xi Jinping's Era

Discussants:

Sonika Gupta, Associate Professor of Global Politics, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Madras, Chennai.

Hemant Adlakha, Associate Professor, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Vice-Chairperson and Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

VALEDICTORY SESSION

1600 – 1700 Hours

Chair: Vijay Nambiar, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; former Ambassador/High Commissioner of India to China, Pakistan & other countries & former Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations.

Valedictory Address: Nirupama Rao, former Foreign Secretary, Government of India and former Ambassador of India to China.

Lessons from the Last 75 Years: India and China

Report of the Conference: Sabaree Mitra, Convener, 15th AICCS; Professor, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Welcoming Delegates to the 16th AICCS: Bhim Subba, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad & Visiting Associate Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

Vote of Thanks: Joanna Mahjabeen, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Gauhati University, Guwahati.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The 15th All India Conference of China Studies (AICCS) was held on November 17-19, 2021, in virtual mode. The Conference was organised by the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS) and the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, in association with Gauhati University & OKD Institute of Social Change and Development, and in partnership with the India Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS); the Special Theme of the Conference was “**Connected Geographies and Cultural Interfaces**”.
- A large number of individual abstracts were received in response to the Call for Papers for the 15th AICCS. Many of these were excellent in terms both contemporary and long-term relevance, methodology, content and research focus. Of the 142 abstracts received, we shortlisted 73 abstracts. And of the abstracts selected, only about 26 full papers were finally received from which 15 were selected by a board of reviewers for final presentation through a rigorous process based on the importance and originality of the theme, methodological rigor, in-depth research and significance of the findings.
- Notably, the 15th AICCS attracted representation from nearly 35 institutions and more than nine hundred participants. The platform brought together scholars from diverse disciplines and training, central and state universities, and research institutions and think-tanks. The sharing of research and exchange of perspectives under the aegis of the 15th AICCS has the potential to launch significant academic collaborations in future.
- In their opening remarks at the Inaugural Session, the Honorary Director, ICS, Prof. Alka Acharya and the Director of IIT Guwahati, Prof. T. G. Sitharam dwelt on the special strengths and features of the respective institutions, their research profile and scholarship and expressed their hopes for future collaborative works through the AICCS network.
- In his opening remarks, Dr. Adrian Haack, the Director of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in India, spoke of the strategic importance of connecting regions between two or more nation-states and how such regions can become a place of socio-political-cultural exchange and understanding. He also opined that India and China can only mitigate their differences through dialogue and mutual understanding, and academic research has an important role to play.

- In her comments, the Convener Prof. Sabaree Mitra traced the journey of AICCS from its inception in 2006 to the present when it has become a prominent platform for showcasing research in India on China; through collaboration with different institutions and universities across the country. She hailed the pioneering role played by the AICCS in mentoring young and emerging scholars from different disciplines with interest in studying China and in building strong scholarly and research networks among them.
- Prof. Sukanya Sharma, Head of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, said that IIT Guwahati was expanding its ambit in various fields of research and given its location as the gateway to India's North-east, much more funding by the state and central government was essential to enable more intensive and serious research work.
- In the Keynote Address titled, '**China and Southeast Asia: A Contemporary History**', eminent historian Prof. Prasenjit Duara elaborated on how trade, civilizational exchanges and dynastic interest in China and South-East Asia from medieval times till the present shaped the entire region. He emphasized the importance of historical developments, viz, the ancient imperial tribute system of China, the sea and land silk route from China to east Asia to India, and trade and commercial exchanges in the region since the medieval times to the present, which will help us to understand the present-day socio-political-cultural structure in the region. He also explained that through in-depth historical analysis of trade and commercial exchanges we will be able to understand the rationale behind China's BRI project and also be able to comprehend the trade exchanges between PRC and other countries.
- The 15th AICCS had three Special Panels reflecting diverse interest and concerns, covering themes of regional interactions and strategic significance, of historical and cultural connections, both tangible and intangible, through history, and a Special Panel on the State of China Studies in India. As a Curtain Raiser to the 15th AICCS, a panel discussion was organised on its eve on November 16, 2022, on the theme of the **CPC's 20th Party Congress** chaired by Prof. Alka Acharya. The panelists were Dr. Shannon Tiezzi, Prof. David Zweig and Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty. All the Special Panels were conceived and convened by scholars with substantial body of work on these niche areas and were by invitation.

- Special Panel I on the *State of China Studies in India* was convened by Dr. Rityusha Mani Tiwary and was chaired by Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty. Four presentations by five scholars approached the theme from different perspectives to analyze the gaps and challenges evident in the way China Studies has developed in India. Adopting cautious optimism, the panelists highlighted the questions and choices facing the Indian scholars as they attempted to overcome limitations of field work and resources.
- Special Panel II on the *Institutional Interfaces & Informal Histories in the Himalayan Contact Zone* was convened by Dr. Swargajyoti Gohain and chaired by Prof. Mahendra Lama. This panel explored connected geographies through cooperation, co-existence and collaboration across political boundaries in the Himalayas. The presentations examined interfaces across the Himalayas by studying histories of institutionalized as well as informal networks. Some of the questions explored were the following: How does the circulation of Buddhist monks, pilgrims and scholars map a contact zone? How do ideas, narratives, and knowledge stemming from both official and popular sources create connected geographies? What are the processes of their production, and implications of power and privilege? The panelists explored these questions through a historical and anthropological lens.
- Special Panel III on the *Geopolitics of Transborder Waters* was convened and chaired by Prof. Nimmi Kurian. The panel debated the imaginative counterpoints to pluralize the imagination of the Brahmaputra by mapping voices, aspirations and perceptions from a borderlands perspective. Many of these issues are located at the intersection between rights and resources, ecologies and cultures, making them central to the ability of people to realize their rights to resources. The presentations foregrounded these questions against a critical assessment of the dominant geopolitical framing of trans-border water politics to explore the extent to which such a framing reduces valuable dialogic space and compounds the risk of a misalignment of interests among national, subnational, regional riparian stakeholders.
- There were two Special Lectures by eminent scholars of China. On the first day, Dr. Madhavi Thampi spoke on ‘**World War II: The Crucible of Modern Sino-Indian Relations?**’ wherein she focused on three aspects of wartime relations between India and China, namely unprecedented official recognition given to the expansion of ties in diverse spheres, impact of the war on the movement of peoples between India and China, and the

complicated political dimensions of the relationship; she argued that relations between India and China during 1939–1945 have been neglected not because they were of little consequence, but because of a blinkered approach to the subject of India-China relations, i.e., the tendency to frame their historical relations within bilateral relations or a ‘friendship versus enmity’ binary, that obscures the complexity and diversity of their connections.

- On the second day of the conference, Prof. Lu Xiaoning delivered a Special Lecture on ‘**Mobile Attraction: Travelling Film Projectionists and Rural Cinema Exhibition in Mao’s China**’. Her paper explored the role of film projectionists as proactive agents and problematized the understanding of Chinese socialist cinema merely as a tool of state propaganda. Prof. Lu argued that it is important not only to study the ideological content of socialist cinema but also to look beyond the textual, because cinema achieves its political function by encountering its audience. Furthermore, there is a much larger social and cultural role played by the projectionists who would put up versatile performances during the film exhibition; they mediated traditional cultural forms and modern technological spectacle, they guided their audience through the film and manipulated them into viewing the film through political lens.

- There were five Thematic Panels on *Northeast India & Trans-Himalayan Connections: Culture & Trade*; *Northeast India & China: Cultural & Educational Interfaces*; *China, India & Southeast Asia: Policies & Perspectives*; *China’s External Relations: Trade & Foreign Aid*, and *Chinese Discourse & Praxis*.

- The first three panels pertained to the special theme of the Conference and showcased a range of topics especially relevant from the perspective of the people of the north-eastern states as also from a policy perspective. The last two panels focused on China’s external relations and domestic governance shaped through specific exercises of building discourse and praxis.

- The Thematic Panels consisted of 15 papers selected from the 26 full papers submitted; these papers reflected an extremely wide range of interests, disciplines and training of scholars, and displayed new innovative and interdisciplinary approaches that sought to move away from conventional categories.

- This was reflected in the paper titles such as ‘(Dis)Connections, Residues and Tibetan Buddhism in the Eastern Himalayas’, ‘Influence of Chinese Vloggers in Northeast India: A Study on the Vlogs of Li Ziqi and Dianxi Xiaoge’, ‘The ‘Pauk-Phaw’ Factor in India’s Act East Policy’, ‘Decoding China’s Foreign Aid Policy: The Case of Pacific Island Countries’, ‘Rocking the Cradle, Ruling the World: Crafting the Ideal Citizen through Children's Songs in the People's Republic of China’ and many others.
- It is from these papers that one will be selected for the **MSB Award**, which is conferred each year to commemorate the legacy of the late Prof. Mira Sinha Bhattacharjea, an iconic Indian scholar of China Studies.
- The Valedictory Address titled, ‘**Lessons from the Last 75 Years: India and China**’ by Ambassador Nirupama Rao was a rich exposition of India-China relations which have displayed many layers and complexities in modern and contemporary times with roots in history. As India's internal ambitions are moving in the direction of development and growth by eliminating poverty and building a resilient manufacturing base, China's domestic and external policies, Amb. Rao argued, are increasingly being guided by authoritarianism, 'wolf-warrior' diplomacy and over-militarization. Given the ground realities, the valedictory also charted a trajectory for India's regional partnerships since a clash of ambitions between India and China in the future could not be ruled out. Amb. Rao felt that scholars and practitioners have a role to play in mitigating the differences between India and China.
- The four lectures, i.e., the Keynote Address by Prof. Prasenjit Duara, the Special Lectures by Dr. Madhavi Thampi and Prof. Lu Xiaoning, and the Valedictory Address by Ambassador Nirupama Rao laid out important sets of principles and frameworks for the study of China today; the lectures also highlighted new avenues of research and the possibilities of new directions of inquiry.
- It was announced that the 16th AICCS will be held in Hyderabad in November 2023, in collaboration with the Department of Political Sciences, Central University of Hyderabad. Dr. Bhim Subba, representing the Department of Political Sciences, Central University of Hyderabad, welcomed the collaboration and invited all present to participate in the 16th AICCS.

CONFERENCE REPORT

The 15th All India Conference of China Studies (AICCS) – an annual flagship event of the Institute of Chinese Studies, Delhi (ICS) – was jointly organized by the ICS and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati, in association with Gauhati University and Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, in partnership with Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and was held in the virtual mode on November 17-19, 2022. The principal objective of the AICCS is to spread interest in and strengthen research on China in India; it promotes active networking among scholars and raises awareness about research and study of China in India. Each conference has a special theme. The special theme of the 15th AICCS was *Connected Geographies and Cultural Interfaces*.

Another notable feature of the AICCS is the Mira Sinha-Bhattacharjee Award – instituted in the memory of one of the finest China scholars of India, a founding member of the ICS and its former Director - for the best original paper at the AICCS. The selection is made by a group of senior scholars, based on methodology, argument and presentation.

Inaugural Session

In the Inaugural Session the Honorary Director, ICS, Prof. Alka Acharya and the Director of IIT Guwahati, Prof. T. G. Sitharam made opening remarks that dwelt on the special features of the scholarship emerging out of the respective institutions and their institutional strengths; they expressed hope that the collaboration through AICCS will be a significant one.

In his Opening Remarks, Adrian Haack, the Director of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in India, discussed about the strategic importance of connecting regions between two or more nation-states and how such regions can become a place of socio-political-cultural exchange and understanding. He also mentioned that India and China can only mitigate their differences through dialogue and mutual understanding, and academic research has an important role to play.

In her comments, the Convener Prof. Sabaree Mitra traced the journey of AICCS from its first inception in 2006 to the present when it has become a prominent platform for showcasing research on China; through collaboration with different institutions across India,

the AICCS also provides a mentoring and networking opportunity to young and emerging scholars from different disciplines with interest in studying China. It is significant that 15th AICCS is a result of academic cooperation between the ICS and three institutions of eminence located in Guwahati, an important city in the North-eastern part of India, regarded by scholars as a strategic link between South, South East and East Asia, sharing common geographical features and development objectives. From the ancient period, interaction in this region has had the civilizational framework at its foundation. Part of the once-thriving southern silk route, this region is often conceptualized as a cultural region, characterized by ethnic affinities and historical interactions between different communities, Himalayan ecologies, shared level of relative deprivation, and so on. On one hand, the region has witnessed rich people-to-people interactions in the realms of culture from ancient times, and on the other it represents the aspirations and anxieties of enormous strategic significance as perceived through the lens of contemporary geo-political considerations. Therefore, the theme of ***Connected Geographies and Cultural Interfaces***, that reflects all these scholarly concerns, has been chosen as the Special Theme this year.

Prof. Sukanya Sharma, Head of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, said that IIT Guwahati is playing an important role in various fields of research and being an institution located in the gateway to Indian North-east, it should be given more funding by the state and central government to further their research work.

Keynote Address was delivered by eminent historian Prof. Prasenjit Duara; the title of the Address was **“China and Southeast Asia: A Contemporary History”**. The presentation looked at China-Southeast Asia relations through the lens of Chinese Tribute Order, wherein the tribute order is the interface with the Southeast Asian Mandala Order and how that relationship has changed today. He put forward the theory of ‘Circulatory Histories (CH)’ that puts more emphasis on cross-institutional relations, networks and geographies that does not take the territory of nations as the subject of history. Notwithstanding the existence of Landed Silk Routes from China to the Mediterranean including southern routes to South and Southeast Asia, for this paper, the Maritime Silk Route was considered more important as between 1300-1850 the Asian Maritime Trade that went from Yemen to China to Japan was more natural, physical and geographical in that it followed the monsoon winds. It has many important entry ports, one of which is the Malacca in the 19th Century. There were networks of Chinese, Indian, Jewish and Arab merchants that conducted sophisticated credit transfer mechanisms in the Indian Ocean. It got intensified during the period of high imperialism of

19th and 20th centuries. During the Cold War, there was a hiatus when trade in this maritime region declined because more attention was paid to national development. Since then, Network Asia has picked up again.

The Imperial Chinese Tribute Order was not entirely different from the Mandala model in that, ideologically it had a center which radiated out. However, there were significant differences also in that the center also symbolizes those at the edge. The biggest difference though was that China was a bureaucratic Empire, internally. Whereas towards the communities and polities outside it was a territorial Empire, they had certain relationships with the Chinese empire and were thought of as being part of the Chinese tribute order. However, this relationship was not so much, at a superficial level dictated by the Imperial center in China but, in fact, the different polities used it for their own purposes.

With Southeast Asia, the Chinese tribute order, as mentioned earlier, represents the interface with the Mandala order having its own internal logic and goal. Srivijaya and Majapahit, very powerful maritime kingdoms during 7th to 12th century, often used the East Asian tribute because they accepted the superiority of the Chinese Emperor, to maintain their own order, saying that they had the imprimatur of the Chinese Emperor. They also used it against other forces that became powerful in the region and around them. For instance, Srivijaya used the Chinese tributary status as gatekeepers to keep out other competitors for Chinese trade, such as the powerful Chola Kingdom in South India.

One of the reasons why the Chinese tribute order became so popular, important, and thus drew so many groups was because it became increasingly about trade, although trade had always been part of it. While ritually, the tributary would pay some tribute in terms of special kinds of exotic minerals or gems, animals, precious goods, manufactured goods or ships, the Emperor, in turn, gave them an even more valuable gift- a kind of a license to trade within a certain region. This grew more as China became more economically powerful, over the last millennium especially after the 10th century in the maritime region. By 16th century, the entire tribute trade zone became loosely integrated through the use of silver. Silver which came from the New World, in particular Mexico and Bolivia, not only arrived in Mughal India, but a bulk of it ended up in China. This led to great intensification of trade, and the economic opportunities were, for a long time, sufficient to keep all of those involved, including the Europeans, vested in the tributary mode.

This was to not say that there was no military violence involved in this interface trade and ritual relationships. Such military authority over the sea route that Zheng He established in Ming dynasty was not maintained beyond the brief window. The military expeditions were principally used to manage border-states who often harassed and threatened the tribute trade at its periphery. The tribute was a mode of seeking equilibrium in border relations and costly expeditions were undertaken largely as punitive and stabilizing measures, with mixed results. It was argued that the flexibility of the tribute order enabled the interlacing of cultural and economic goals for the various players, without significant use of military violence.

Coming to the China and Southeast Asia in the 20th century, Prof. Duara began by asserting that China's goals in Southeast Asia remained consistent since the late Qing, which was to restore its rightful status as a global power and influence in its old tribute zone. There was also a large ethnic Chinese population in Southeast Asia, which was wealthy already by the early 20th century and influential and willing to assist the Chinese government. During the early People's Republic of China, this was the only zone of influence that it could really have in Asia, and it sought to create its foundation as a regional power by having this as a zone of its influence. China had a complex strategy in Southeast Asia of both maintaining state to state relations and giving revolutionary support, although it was limited sometimes.

Highlighting the importance of regionalism as the intermediate stage between globalization and national modes of resolving issues, Prof. Duara argued that Southeast Asian regionalism began with the integration of 10 ASEAN states in the '90's. Soon after the financial crisis, there developed a kind of interdependence, not only within ASEAN but with certain neighboring countries. One of the interesting things in the first decade of the 21st century is that ASEAN had tried to create regional interdependency and enmeshing of other powers through commercial diplomacy. Since 2009, the tensions in the South China Sea, especially with regards to China has led to a fair number of tensions and it very much signaled challenges to ASEAN unity and to the architecture as a whole. Hence, Southeast Asia —the countries and the ASEAN — began to lose confidence in the idea of a 'peaceful rise of China'.

Less conspicuous but more damaging to the hinterland of Southeast Asia is the Chinese construction of gargantuan dams on the Mekong and Salween Rivers as well as on the Brahmaputra in the Himalayas. Moreover, East, Southeast and South Asia are physically interconnected, especially through rivers. Dam building on Mekong, Salween, Brahmaputra

etc have major negative effects on the livelihoods of thousands of communities. Subsequently, there has been activism in both the Mekong and Salween and by the Chinese in Yunnan in the first decade of the 21st century wherein numerous environmental NGOs joined with these movements to protest these dams and they were quite successful till 2012-2013. There are civil society organizations which emerged in those democratic parts of Southeast Asia, including places like Vietnam and Cambodia, and Myanmar which led to the cancellation of a dam building project. For example, a group in Cambodia, known as the *Avatars*, has been very active in protecting their forests against deforestation involving not just the work of the NGO but also the youth and scientists both nationally and globally.

However, the situation is different with the BRI. It has been indeed considered very valuable for many countries that do not get enough investments for their infrastructure. Nonetheless, it has been met with resistance, primarily due to issues of indebtedness, especially in Africa who owe 30% of its debt to China. Also, China's digital power is actually more significant now as any infrastructure it builds includes some form of digital control, whether it is about China developing artificial intelligence or militarizing the GPS system. Prof. Duara highlighted how China has been listening to the criticism and has been actually pulling back on several fronts, such as on the Mekong issue. Especially since the Covid-19 pandemic, over 20% of the projects are being renegotiated or cancelled, more in Africa than in Southeast Asia. If China is willing to agree to re-meeting or renegotiating some of the conditions, it can employ a kind of 'debt for nature' strategy by which the borrower country debt is forgiven in exchange for the country's commitment to fund key environmental objectives, such as tropical forest preservation etc. This way, it can create a win-win situation, though some Southeast Asian countries like Vietnam are very doubtful about it.

The Co-convenor, Dr. Pahi Saikia proposed the Vote of Thanks. She dwelt at length on the tireless efforts made by a whole range of senior scholars from partnering institutions, a large group of young scholars in the role of rapporteurs and technical support, and above all the presenters and participants, that made AICCS a successful academic exercise. Dr. Saikia also thanked the partner institutions of the AICCS, i.e., IIT Guwahati, Gauhati University, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD), and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) for their support in the conference.

Special Panel I: *State of China Studies in India*

The panel was chaired by **Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty**, Emeritus Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; Distinguished Professor, Council of Social Development, New Delhi; former Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Delhi.

The panelists were **Prof. G. Venkat Raman**, Professor, Humanities & Social Sciences Area, Indian Institute of Management Indore; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, **Dr. Usha Chandran**, Assistant Professor, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, & **Mr. Raj Gupta**, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, **Dr. Aravind Yelery**, Senior Research Fellow, Peking University, Beijing/Shenzhen; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi, and **Dr. Rityusha Mani Tiwary**, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, University of Delhi; Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

In this panel, four presentations by five scholars approached the theme from different perspectives to analyze the gaps and challenges evident in the way China Studies has developed in India. Adopting cautious optimism, the panelists took stock of the grounds covered in this journey in order to highlight the questions and choices facing the Indian scholars as the community look to overcome inherent limitations and scale new heights. The first presentation by Prof. G. Venkat Raman titled, **“The Challenges of Studying China: Making a Case for Cautious Optimism”**, candidly discussed the current state of China Studies in India. He stated that while there has been significant growth in the field with the emergence of a young generation of scholars and Institutions now setting up special China Studies centers, much remains to be done. He expounded on two areas to be focused on, namely teaching and research with ample policy making potential. In the end he strongly reiterated the importance of studying China in India especially considering we share our geographical boundaries and boast of civilizational contacts with China.

In the second presentation titled, **“Relevance of Chinese language in China Studies in India”**, Dr. Usha Chandran and Mr. Raj Gupta presented a study exploring the relevance of Chinese language in China Studies using quantitative and qualitative methods and presented preliminary findings of a survey done on students and teachers engaged in the study of Chinese language and culture at various Universities in India. They elaborated on the

importance of the knowledge of Chinese language in carrying out research on China. The study also showed that teachers believe that more opportunities for academic exchanges, more funding for infrastructure etc. will go a long way in helping students face the challenges of studying Chinese language.

Dr. Aravind Yelery in his presentation titled, **“Reassessment of Methods and Tools of Research in Area Studies: Exploring the Inflection Point of Accessibility and Efficacy of Technological Tools”**, expounded on the tools and methods available for carrying out research in area studies. He stated that there are rising challenges, contradictions and limitations to pursuing China studies in India in present times from undergraduate level up to post graduate level which has created what he calls “Chinese language fatigue”. Dr. Yelery stated that there is a large network of metadata available about China and there is a need for the scholars to tap the potential that technology provides and do away with the traditional notion of literature published in journals and books when it comes to studying China.

In the last presentation of the panel titled, **“The State of China Studies in India: Of Methodological and Disciplinary Boundaries”**, Dr. Rityusha Mani Tiwary presented her views on the dilemmas facing China Studies in India today, her observations on state of China Studies in India in the last five decades and finally what she sees as future signposts for this academic field. Dr Tiwary noted with optimism that in recent decades there is an enhanced “desire to know” China framework which is leading the knowledge creation on China in India. There is an understanding that identifying with a particular discipline is not a hindrance to forming an integral approach to China Studies and researcher can traverse disciplinary boundaries in order to carry out research on China. The presence of an India specific context of reading China is a welcome addition to knowledge building on China and our own unique positioning as Asian neighbor to China enhances our capacities to understand China beyond ethnocentric dichotomization.

Thematic Panel I: Northeast India & Trans-Himalayan Connections: Culture & Trade

The panel was chaired by **Prof. Patricia Uberoi**, Emeritus Fellow and former Chairperson, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

The panelists were **Mr. Mayongam Muinao**, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Political Science, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, **Mr. Mathew Thongminlal**, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and **Dr.**

Jigme Yeshe Lama, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta, Kolkata.

In the presentation titled, “**Re-inventing the North East India Trans-Himalaya Trading Route in the Height of Indo-China Relation: Challenges and Prospects**,” Mr. Mayongam Muinao, highlighted the significance of the Northeast India region as the centre as well as a transit route for trans-Himalayan border trade and also how the trade linkages have brought cultural, civilizational and technological exchange among Kamarupa dynasties, Tibet, Bhutan and China; he also suggested the region could serve as a window to Southeast Asian region. Besides forging historical people-to-people connections between communities of Northeast India and China, globalization has been a historical reality in the region as against the region being wrongly depicted as landlocked and isolated in colonial history. While noting that in the economic discussion, border will be restrained by incorporations among countries, he argued that after India and China attained Independence and Liberation respectively, the revival of the age-old trading routes has not materialised because both neighbours have viewed one another through security and strategic perspective rather than as economic opportunities. He added that as a result, the Northeast region has become a victim of India-China rivalry. But economic opportunities could be revived through the proper implementation of India’s “Act East Policy” and China’s “BCIM.”

In the presentation on “**Cultural and Trade Route Linkage between China-Myanmar-India**,” Mr. Mathew Thongminlal traced the ancient trans-regional trilateral trade networks and cultural exchanges between India, Myanmar, and Yunnan province in China in particular between Frontier tribes *Jingpo* in Yunnan province of China, *Kachin* in Myanmar and *Singpho* in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in India. The interaction dates back to millennia before the arrival of the British, and has implications for the strategic geographic dynamics during and after the colonial period in India. He highlighted that *Jingpo*, *Kachin* and *Singpo* share the same ethnicity and live in a similar landscape. Although, before the colonial period rich scholarly exchanges existed between India and China, Chinese empires had focussed on controlling the area. Mr. Thongminlal argued that this trilateral overland trade route was adversely affected after colonial expansionism in the region as this period is marked by interplay between different actors, each attempting to carve out a sphere of influence. After the creation of nation-states, however, this region became more inward looking and the unsettled border conflict further created barriers between these regions and internal problems have also played an important role. He also highlighted the significance of the Manau cultural

festival celebrated by tribes in these three nation-states as a celebration of Pan-culturalism binding local communities of the region. He suggested that cultural and people-to-people exchanges should be encouraged.

In his presentation titled, “**(Dis)Connections, Residues and Tibetan Buddhism in the Eastern Himalayas**,” while tracing the remains of past connectivities, Mr. Jigme Yeshe Lama attempted to study the interactions of the modern state with Tibetan Buddhism, especially *Guru Padmasambava*, in the Eastern Himalayas by employing Raymond William’s ‘residual formations’ concept in understanding the dynamic role of Tibetan Buddhism in the region. He outlined the strategic and security concern of the region after the formation of nation-states, especially India and China. He argued that as an “active residue” Tibetan Buddhism connects the geographies of the Eastern Himalayas and beyond through monastic institutions, reincarnated lamas, sacred spaces, and pilgrimage spots, forming an interface between Buddhist culture and geography; he also maintained that the dividing lines between the religious and the political obligations in the Himalayan region have remained ambiguous and blurred as the ritual sovereignties exercised by the Tibetan Buddhist state continue to exist and interact with the modern polities. He held that following the formation of the nation-states there has been a trend towards the destruction of ritual sovereignties and the interaction of traditional sovereignties in the Himalayas. He further argued that mainland China has attempted to incorporate the residue to foster the claims in the region of the eastern Himalayas and the residue is political in nature.

Special Lecture I

The Special Lecture was chaired by **Prof. Kamal Sheel**, Professor (Retired) of Chinese, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi

The Special Lecture was delivered by **Dr. Madhavi Thampi**, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi and former Associate Professor, Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi. The title of the lecture was “World War II: The Crucible of Modern Sino-Indian Relations?”. In her presentation she focused on three aspects of wartime relations between India and China, namely unprecedented official recognition given to the expansion of ties in diverse spheres, impact of the war on the movement of peoples between India and China, and the complicated political dimensions of the relationship.

During the war Japan had got control of the ports and coasts of China which disrupted the maritime trade with India. It prompted an increase in trade through land route. India's helping hand to China in their resistance against the Japanese army during the war especially in transportation of goods to Western China through India had built a positive base for the relations. There was a huge influx of Chinese people to India during the war as they felt it was safer in India than in war-torn China. However, the political landscape in India during the war had proved to be a major influence on the relations. Especially the divergent views of the British Raj the Indian National Congress and Kuomintang had made it difficult to come to a common ground. The British view that China was aggressing in the borders had also impacted the relations. In conclusion, she argued that relations between India and China during 1939-1945 have been neglected not because they were of little consequence, but because of a blinkered approach to the subject of India-China relations. She maintained that the tendency to frame their historical relations within bilateral relations or friendship versus enmity binary obscured the complexity and diversity of their connections.

Special Panel II: *Institutional Interfaces & Informal Histories in the Himalayan Contact Zone*

The panel was chaired by **Prof. Mahendra P. Lama**, Professor, Centre for South Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; former Vice-Chancellor, Sikkim University, Gangtok.

The panelists were **Dr. Swati Chawla**, Associate Professor of History, Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities, O.P Jindal Global University, Sonipat, **Dr. Aniket Alam**, Associate Professor, Human Sciences Research Group, Centre for Exact Humanities, IIIT-Hyderabad, **Dr. Sanjukta Datta**, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Ashoka University, Sonipat, and **Dr. Swargajyoti Gohain**, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Ashoka University, Sonipat.

This panel explored connected geographies through cooperation, co-existence and collaboration across political boundaries in the Himalayas. The presentations examined interfaces across the Himalayas by studying histories of institutionalized as well as informal networks. Some of the questions explored were the following: How does the circulation of Buddhist monks, pilgrims and scholars map a contact zone? How do ideas, narratives, and knowledge stemming from both official and popular sources create connected geographies?

What are the processes of their production, and implications of power and privilege? The panelists explored these questions through a historical and anthropological lens.

Prof. Mahendra P. Lama introduced this special panel by giving a brief description of interconnected history of Himalayan region. The entire Himalayan region is a vast place full of natural resources which sustains a huge number of socio-culturally different human population divided by borders of modern nation states. These modern nation states coexist in this region in a delicate balance. Trade, commerce and sharing of natural resources are the core factors that help this Himalayan region sustain such a huge number of human populations. Emergence of China as a massive regional economic power also threatens the socio-political equilibrium of this region. He also emphasized the point that the formation of modern nation states in the 20th century by European colonial powers and the resultant migration of huge population destabilized the entire Himalayan region. Emergence of modern nation states marked a new phase of development which is totally different from the historical socio-political-cultural structure of this region. The causes of present-day conflict between nation states of this region can be found in the historical development and we can come to possible solution to these issues through thorough understanding of different factors like cultural heritage, religion, borders, and vested interests of different groups of people.

Dr. Swati Chawla in her paper titled, **“The Namgyal Institute of Tibetology and Sikkim’s Resistance to Merger with India”**, gave a detailed description of various prominent Tibetology centers located all over India founded by Tibetan community in India with the help of government as well as private NGOs to further the study of Tibetan culture, history and Buddhism. Tibetology centers in Ladakh, Sarnath, Sikkim, Bangalore and several other places, especially the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, are playing an important role in promoting Tibetology. These centers are also a gateway to understand Tibetan culture, history and Buddhism. She also emphasized on the point that successive Indian government’s views about the Tibetan population in India changed depending on the changing international circumstances.

Dr. Aniket Alam in his presentation titled, **“Oral History of Border Making in the Western Himalayas in the 20th Century”**, gave an in-depth description of the formation of the borders of modern nation states and how British colonial powers influenced the formation of these borders and its impact on the entire Himalayan region. He also dwelt on the perspectives of scholars like Curzon, Owen Lattimore, Alistair Lamb, Benjamin Hopkins and

Kyle Gardner. The works of these prominent scholars provide us with the details of how the borders of the nation states of the Himalayan region formed and how the formation of borders created present day tensions between nations in this region. He also conducted field study which provided the practical knowledge of how historically people formed their borders and how modern borders of nation states interrupt free flow of information. Historically borders in Himalayan region between different groups of human population were formed based upon oral, cultural and religious traditions. Modern borders of Himalayan nation states fundamentally run counter to historical traditions – which is much more prevalent in people's mind – which in turn created a lot of tensions between modern nation states.

Dr. Sanjukta Datta in her paper titled, **“Across the Himalayas: Magadha's Buddhist Networks (c. 5–15th centuries CE)”**, described the historical significance of Indian Buddhist sites, mainly Bodhgaya and Nalanda which were the centers of religious and cultural exchanges between India, East Asia, and China during 5th to 15th century CE. As a center of exchange of religious paraphernalia and a prominent meeting place of Buddhist scholars from all over Asia both Bodhgaya and Nalanda played an important role. Exchanges between China and Indian Buddhist religious sites increased during Tang and Song dynasty. Tang and Song emperors gave imperial patronage to Chinese Buddhist scholars to come to India to collect religious texts and paraphernalia in order to provide divine legitimacy to their rule. Land and sea trade routes also played an important role in dissemination of Buddhist culture all over Asia.

In the presentation titled, **“Institutional Networks and the Forging of Indian Himalayan Solidarity”**, Dr. Swargajyoti Gohain described how Indian Buddhist monasteries after 1950s became centers of Tibetan and Buddhist studies and how these institutions support Tibetan population in India. These institutions become alternative study centers for Tibetan population and also become doorway to research and study Tibetan culture and Buddhism. She also pointed out the fact that rapid adoption of modern communication technology by Tibetan population helps them to spread their culture; at the same time, she also expressed concerned that more and more Tibetan people in India are losing interest in their own culture.

Thematic Panel II: *Northeast India & China: Cultural & Educational Interfaces*

The panel was chaired by **Prof. Avijit Banerjee**, Professor & Head, Cheena Bhavana, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan; Adjunct Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

The panelists were **Ms. Daveirou Lanamai**, Assistant Professor (Chinese), Department of Foreign Languages, Tezpur University, **Ms. Ningshen Zingjarwon**, M.Phil, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and **Ms. Ningshen Zingjarwon**, M.Phil, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

In her presentation on the “**Influence of Chinese Vloggers in Northeast India: A Study on the Vlogs of Li Ziqi and Dianxi Xiaoge**”, Ms. Daveirou Lanamai examined the influence of two Chinese female migrant worker-turned Vloggers, namely Li Ziqi and Dianxi Xiaoge in Manipur, based on their immense popularity and the content of their vlogs showcasing idyllic rural lifestyle; the scholar also looked at the forms of appreciation and cultural appropriation among the youth in Manipur. Her paper examined the intent behind such localisation of digital content and also broached issues of identity struggle, desire for reassertion of racial and food identity among Manipuri youth. She argued that the steady rise in the consumption and reception of foreign social media content among the youth in Northeast India, the dissemination and appreciation of various forms of Chinese culture and the acceptance of a positive image of China should be viewed from the lens of nostalgia, reassertion of their racial identity and as a space for exploring new opportunities. She believes that such study would bust stereotypical tendencies and can help in a better understanding of the aspirations and hopes of the younger generation in this region.

In the presentation titled, “**Tracing Folk Ideas and Worldview in Folktales: A Comparative Analysis of Some Chinese Ethnic Minorities and the Meiteis of Manipur**”, Ms. Ningshen Zingjarwon analysed the ethnic and cultural connections between ethnic minorities in China and the *Meitei* ethnic group in Manipur by focussing on select folktales. In her presentation, she compared some strikingly similar versions of select *Meitei* and Chinese folktales such as the *Meitei* tales of ‘*Numit Kappa*’, ‘*Tapta*’, ‘*Houdong Lambeiba*’ and the Chinese tales of ‘Shooting the Sun’, ‘A Tale of a Man Who Lost His Axe’, ‘Mr Dongguo and the Wolf’. Her research revealed integral connections between the value systems, linguistic, literary and folk traditions of these communities and she argued that the strikingly parallel tales might have been handed down over generations by a Tibeto-Burman

speaker who migrated to Manipur from China. Her study revealed the ‘explanatory potential’ of folk literature in establishing ethnic ties between distinctive cultures while also reiterating the value of folk literature as a vital source of historical research.

In his presentation on “**Chinese Language Education in India's Northeast Region**”, Mr. Shyamkumar Ningthoujam located the status of Mandarin in the global context and assessed the opportunities and challenges for teaching and learning the Chinese language in India with a special reference to the Northeast region. While reflecting upon the state and current trends of Chinese language education in the region, he argued that avoiding China in the present scenario is not an option for India and understanding each other’s language and culture is of immense significance to facilitate bilateral ties; he maintained that trade and business with China and language education should be dealt with separately and should not be viewed through the prism of politics.

Thematic Panel III: *China, India & Southeast Asia: Policies & Perspectives*

The panel was chaired by **Ambassador Ashok K. Kantha**, Honorary Fellow and former Director, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; former Ambassador of India to China.

The panelists were **Dr. Dickey Lama**, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Women's College, Calcutta, Kolkata, **Ms. Shruti Dey**, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Politics & International Studies, School of Social Sciences & International Studies, Pondicherry University, and **Ms. Swagata Saha**, Doctoral Candidate, School of International Studies, Symbiosis International (Deemed) University, Pune.

In her presentation titled, “**Tianxia and Kyaukpyu: A Narrative for Myanmar**”, Dickey Lama introduced the concept of *tianxia*- “All under heaven”, an imperial concept which has seen a revival in Chinese foreign policy. She gave an overview of its present deployment as an instrument for an imagined past and an imagined future. Noting Myanmar’s strategic importance for China to gain access to the Indian Ocean region, she explained how the narrative of the “Chinese dream” and “*tianxia*” has been constructed by China to propagate the Belt and Road Initiative to extend its spheres of influence and *Kyaukpyu* port is thus a manifestation of the concept of *tianxia*. She emphasized that the Chinese world order posited against the west needs its own philosophical narrative and thus there is an effort at the revival of the concept of *tianxia* in the contemporary period. She explained the concept of the “Chinese culture area” and how the engagement in it was not of equals but was that of subordination. She concluded by noting that while Myanmar has been historically paying

tributes to China, today the relationship is defined as a '*Pauk Phaw*' relationship; China has stood by Myanmar by preventing human rights resolutions against it and China sees Myanmar favourably because it is Myanmar's largest trading partner and connects China to the Indian ocean.

In her paper titled, "**China's Rise and Hedging of India and Vietnam Perspective**" Shruti Dey explored how middle and small states were mitigating challenges in the post-cold war order which made room for the concept of "hedging". Noting that there is no fixed definition of hedging, it can still be understood as a middle strategy between pure balancing and pure bandwagoning. Discussing the threat perception towards China, she emphasized that both India and Vietnam have faced China's aggression and noted that hedging provides for both countries to diversify their relations and reduce over-dependence. She pointed out that India's threat perception towards China is going to become more hard-hitting; but this aspect does not diminish the possibilities for exploring positive cooperation in different domains. In the case of Vietnam, though there is a conflict of interest between Vietnam and China, especially in the maritime domain, so far Vietnam has managed China's assertive maritime behaviour through bilateral dialogues and binding engagement. In conclusion, she noted that given the altering nature of geopolitics, hedging is not the answer to all kinds of threats.

In the joint paper titled "**The '*Pauk-Phaw*' factor in India's Act East Policy**", Swagata Saha first introduced how Myanmar, positioned at the crossroads of South Asia and Southeast Asia, has been the stepping stone of India's eastward ambition with many primordial, developmental, trade and connectivity linkages existing between both India and Myanmar as well as India and China. Her presentation then analysed the salience and implications of India-Myanmar relations for India's Act East Policy with a focus on "connectivity" and "citizenship". Shedding light on the "citizenship" aspect, she noted that the "we-they" distinction is well entrenched and is often aggravated by different factors. She further noted that economic pursuit and religious persecution in Myanmar have been the prime drivers of the emigration of Muslim minorities from Myanmar to adjoining China. However, Rohingya who have been termed as "stateless people" find no space in the enlisted ethnic minorities under the Burmese National law of 1982 and are also not covered by the Citizenship Amendment Act 2019. Explaining the "connectivity" aspect of her presentation, she noted that connectivity has claimed to be the new Meta pattern of our times. In her conclusion, she emphasized that in the context of this region, connectivity and citizenship have been one another's fulfillers as well as a counter-breeding ground for China and India to make their

presence resonate in South and South-east Asia. However, India must engage in Myanmar for the singular reason of the Neighbourhood policy.

Special Lecture II

The Special Lecture was chaired by **Prof. Rashmi Doraiswamy**, Professor, MMAJ Academy of International Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi and Recipient of the National Best Film Critic Award (1994).

The Special Lecture was delivered by **Prof. Lu Xiaoning**, Reader in Modern Chinese Culture and Language, SOAS China Institute, SOAS University of London. The title of the lecture was “**Mobile Attraction: Travelling Film Projectionists and Rural Cinema Exhibition in Mao’s China**”. Her paper presented a study of travelling film projectionists during Mao period to illustrate the role of film projectionists as active agents and problematized the understanding of Chinese socialist cinema merely as a tool of state propaganda. Prof. Lu argued that it is important not only to study the ideological content of socialist cinema but also to look beyond the textual because cinema achieves its political function by encountering its audience. Her paper illustrated how understanding Chinese socialist cinema from the perspective of only propaganda limits our understanding of the much larger social and cultural role played by the projectionists who would put up versatile performance during film exhibition; they mediated traditional cultural forms and modern technological spectacle, they guided their audience through the film and manipulated them into viewing the film through political lens. Travelling film projectionists in Mao’s China functioned as the agent of Chinese socialist culture bringing cinema to the broadest of audience making cinema accessible to remote rural areas and at the same time becoming a spectacle due to their attractive performance. She further elaborated on the role of film projectionists which not only involved taking cinema to the audience but also to help audience understand what the cinema meant.

Special Panel III: *Geopolitics of Transborder Waters*

The panel was chaired by **Prof. Nimmi Kurian**, Professor, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi

The panelists were **Dr. Ruth Gamble**, Senior Lecturer, History, Department of Archaeology and History, La Trobe University, Victoria, **Dr. Douglas Hill**, Associate Professor, School of Geography-*Te Iho Whenua*, University of Otago, Dunedin, and **Dr. Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman**,

Programme Coordinator and Research Associate, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, New Delhi and Visiting Research Associate, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.

The panel debated the imaginative counterpoints to pluralize the imagination of the Brahmaputra by mapping voices, aspirations and perceptions from a borderlands perspective. Many of these issues are located at the intersection between rights and resources, ecologies and cultures, making them central to the ability of people to realize their rights to resources. The presentations foregrounded these questions against a critical assessment of the dominant geopolitical framing of trans-border water politics to explore the extent to which such a framing reduces valuable dialogic space and compounds the risk of a misalignment of interests among national, subnational, regional riparian stakeholders.

The chair of the session, Prof. Nimmi Kurian, started the session by talking about the idea of connected geographies and linked ecologies. She further pointed out that while we have connected geographies but we lack the connected discourses on ecologies and the India-China conversation on water have been looked through geopolitical lens only and thus producing a distorted history of the river. She added that the geopolitics has produced distorted readings of the river and pinpointed three reasons; the Brahmaputra has been reduced to the site of conflict because of the securitization discourse of water. The discourse pervading the securitization policies has led to no meaningful interaction with the border communities rather the fixation with diversion has led to diverting the debate. This wilful blindness has led to the central protagonist the border communities and region with no institutional entry point, rather it has turned into a Delhi-Beijing conversation in the geopolitical and securitization arena. The only way getting forward is to pluralize the imagination of Brahmaputra by bringing scale into the conversation or inverting the scale into national and subnational themes and see how that produces different meaning to the water bodies.

In the first presentation of the session titled, **“China’s Yarlung Tsangpo Challenge: Balancing Green Power, Biodiversity Protection, Geopolitics, and Indigenous Rights”**, Dr. Ruth Gamble, began by stating that the main discourse of the paper runs on two themes, the biodiversity of the region and the position of the Chinese state regarding the *Yarlung Tsangpo* in terms of time, geopolitical and state escape. She then explained the physicality and geography of the region insisting that the region is not only a watershed but along with it moves a whole ecosystem of mud shed including nitrogen. She further said that the place has

three-biodiversity hotspot intersecting together, Indo-Burman, the Himalayan region and the mountains of south-western China. The steep gradients lead to change of biomes in a space of few kilometres. The place is geologically dynamic and therefore has an intense diversity of fauna. She said that China developed its understanding of urban planning and rural management of the land resources from the ancient traditions of Chinese dynasties. The understanding was mostly based on hydrological and urban planning where '*feng shui*' comes into play, which is more about harmonising wind and water closing in with the idea of a civilization with the ordered walls. Chinese history has been replete with economic diversions and mentioned the Grand Canal built between Beijing, Hangzhou and Shanghai. In 19th century the river became a site for contestation between Qing China and British as the McMahon line was drawn cutting through the river, a contestation that was then passed on to India and China during 1962 border wars. Therefore, India and China started administrating the border region turning the border communities into minority communities. The Chinese state, she further added, is looking at civilising the area through the ecological civilisation (*shengati wenming*) which is to bring in infrastructure of dams and enclosures to tame the environment. The Chinese state is following the Marxist idea of moving through different stages of civilization, finally leading the world to an ecological civilization. Finally, the speaker concluded by talking about the 14th Five Year Plan in the context of *Yarlung Tsangpo* dam and the future of the Chinese state in civilising the river and its motivations for the same. It was to be seen if the India-China contestation along the region would continue or there would develop an understanding of the histories and philosophies of these water bodies so as to create a new imagination.

In the next presentation titled **“Contesting the imagined geographies of the *Yarlung Tsangpo-Brahmaputra Basin*”**, Dr. Douglas Hill said that the main argument is about the water body in the present basin and its orthodox discourses. The idea was to look at how different actors at different part of the basin perceive these places and conceive the ideas related to them in terms of hydropower, modernization, ecosystem and the provisions of livelihood. The other focus of the paper was on concept of scale, which is helpful in throwing light on the orthodox discourses. The speaker further said that one of the main geopolitical contradictions is that idea of the basins gets discursively constructed and as a consequence materially contested between Delhi and Beijing. But the focus should be more on the scale of the geographies rather than the two entities. The discourse focussing solely on Delhi and Beijing exclude a whole range and scale of people not only from Assam and Arunachal

Pradesh in India but also from the lower parts of the basin. The speaker added that the idea of imagined geographies creates discursive forms that are premised on the construction of the other. There is need for a new imagination to understand the water discourses.

Water has become an object of national security through the intervention of security intellectuals and foreign policy specialists. This understanding of water views connectivity through infrastructure development and economic integration. He felt that accessing data about hydrological flows is at the root of many of the contentious issues. He said that the rescaling of the state space of the economic activities connected to the border region and the coastal region is in fact growing in both the countries but the regional policies and institutional innovation is lacking in these spaces. He ended by saying that one should not think only in terms of national securities and interests, but also with unbiased view of the local population and the border people with an eye on the subnational hierarchies present there. Citing the example of *Mekong* River basin managed through the *Lancang-Mekong* Cooperation Mechanism, he also said that the countries should focus more on the multilateral trans-boundary initiatives.

In the presentation titled, **“Materializing and Embedding Concrete Borders in Transboundary Himalayan River Basins”**, Dr. Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman started with the contestation of larger Himalayan basin as the main argument for building of dams in India, China, Bhutan and Nepal, all of which have a cumulative effect on the connected geographies of these regions. The scholar said that the rivers have a larger interconnectedness in the south-eastern region but that has not been taken into consideration much as the nation states are preoccupied with the fixed notion of the hard borders. The other major point the speaker focussed on was the concrete hydropower dams as the border walls. He said that the newly constructed hydropower dams have become games of power play in the national security architecture. They are being deployed by different nation state as sovereignty markers. The colonial understanding of the water basins were executed through the principles and rules of McMahon Line and Line of Actual Control, whereas the McMahon line was drawn on the map and the line of actual control is drawn on the perception of the armed forces and is a political divider. He explained how the hydropower dams are located away from the actual borderline but the materiality and the power deployed in the geopolitical discourse effectively makes it a border wall be it proposed, half built or fully active. He further added that these spots are also the fulcrum of the civil society protests in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam and therefore the dams are not only geopolitical function between nation states of India and China

but also are contentious sub nationally between states such as Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. Citing the example of dam building in *Tawang* the scholar showed the interconnectedness between the national and subnational region and the larger river basin. Water bodies have become the structures of inclusive and exclusive spaces between ‘us’ versus ‘them’, ‘downstream’ versus ‘upstream’. He argued that the concrete hydropower dams that are deployed in river basins underline the borders of the riverine spaces between nation states, and sub nationally between provincial borders within nation states. Therefore, the dam building has not only become a project with the respective perception and understanding of calculative territoriality, but according to the local communities, the dam building has become a process that was erasing the memories of the river. In conclusion the speaker argued that infrastructure around the dam building would also become sites of archives and contested histories between nation states.

Thematic Panel IV: *China’s External Relations: Trade & Foreign Aid*

The panel was chaired by **Prof. Biswajit Dhar**, Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

The panelists were **Ms. Sharmistha Hazra**, Doctoral Candidate (Politics and International Relations), School of Liberal Studies, Pandit Deendayal Energy University, Gandhinagar, **Mr. Jasveer Singh**, Doctoral Candidate (Diplomacy and Disarmament Division), Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and **Dr. Khanindra Ch. Das**, Assistant Professor (Economics), Birla Institute of Management Technology, Greater Noida.

Ms. Sharmistha Hazra in the presentation on, “**China’s Strategic Presence in Three East African Ports: Implications for Indo-Pacific Security in the Western Indian Ocean**”, looked into China’s strategic presence in East African ports and what this implies for India and the Indo-Pacific security. In the need of securing its International Security goal and Maritime power, China is heavily investing in port construction in various nations across the world under the Maritime Silk Road program. China has always kept Africa by its side through heavy investments in a number of projects to get its supports on the issue of Taiwan. Other than this, Africa is also rich in natural resources and important destination of China for energy. As 80% of oil are being imported by China through the Indian Ocean and the strait of Malacca and Beijing considers that Indian Ocean region is being controlled by the US and

India, therefore it has grown military presence and economic activities in this area, modernized its navy etc. Under its flagship project BRI, China has been able to get the hold of East African coasts in line with Indian Ocean region, in most of the cases, China directly owns the port, invest through funding and take part in construction. It is needless to say that the Indo-Pacific region has emerged as the new arena of geopolitics after increasing Chinese activities and therefore it has become inevitable for India to increase its cooperation with various East African nations and it is doing so to counter China's aggressive role and its involvement in domestic politics of various countries like Sri Lanka, Pakistan so as to avoid any instability in its neighbourhood. India have taken various competitive measures to counter China like cooperating with like-minded nations in the mechanisms like QUAD, AUKUS etc, investing in Asia-Africa Growth Corridor, attempting to reach a trade pact with Africa, prioritizing Africa in India def expo 2022 etc.

Mr. Jasveer Singh's presentation titled **“Decoding China's Foreign Aid Policy: The Case of Pacific Island Countries”**, discussed about China's foreign aid policy in the Pacific Island countries, what is the significance of Chinese foreign aid compared with the traditional donors and how does China maintain its influence to fulfil its strategic national interests. With the rise of China, it has emerged as 2nd largest modern donor of foreign aids (mainly military aid, private aid) to Pacific Island countries, 80% of which goes to Asian and African nations in forms of grants, interest free loans and concessional loans through technical cooperation, human resource development, emergency humanitarian aid, volunteering programs, debt relief, supply of goods and materials etc. Not just foreign aids, but the trade volume of China with these specific Island countries has increased too. It gives the Pacific Island countries aids with special focus on human capacity building, in some cases it connects the project with the BRI. Now the main reason behind these foreign aids is the shift of power politics to Indo-Pacific region. China has to increased its trade investments, aids to these countries to win the contest against Taiwan and others in the region. It can be said that China has its economic and strategic motives behind these aids, hence striving for strategic partnerships with these countries. Papua New Guinea is being China's largest military aid recipient with 18 billion US dollars in the Indian Ocean region within the span of just 18 years (2000-2018).

In his presentation titled, **“Growth of Cereals Trade between India and China: What it means for Food Security?”** Dr. Khanindra Ch. Das looked at the cereal trade between India and China and what significance it carries for the food security. In the field of cereals export

(mainly of broken rice), India became the ninth largest exporter to China in 2021 in spite of the problems like border clashes with it since the *Galwan* incident, the banning of several Chinese apps in India etc., trade flourished between these two nations, especially in the field of cereals. This was just because two years of Covid-19, disruptions in global supply chain, floods in number of places in China, China relaxed market barriers while importing cereals from India. These were the moves taken by China which was somehow to balance the relation and to avoid any further economic backlash from India as food security has all along been a priority of any country. And at the end of the presentation, he mentioned that any kind of sudden bans must be avoided to ensure the food security and continuous food supply. In some cases, it needs improvement as well like providing higher income to the farmers, diversifying the supply to economically larger countries like the West or Europe other than less developed countries and improve the standard of cereals etc.

Thematic Panel V: *Chinese Discourse & Praxis*

The panel was chaired by **Prof. Akhil Ranjan Dutta**, Professor, Department of Political Science, Gauhati University, Guwahati.

The panelists were **Ms. Priyanka Keshry**, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for Chinese and South East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, **Ms. Cherry Hitkari**, PG Intensive Advanced Diploma in Chinese Language (CF-2), Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi, and **Mr. Prahlad Kumar Singh**, Doctoral Candidate, Centre for East Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

In her paper titled, “**Ah Q, Ah Qism in China’s IR Discourse: Focus on India**”, Ms. Priyanka Keshry started by pointing out that Lu Xun had created the *Ah Q* character as a symbol of how an ordinary person becomes a victim of the Chinese traditional feudal values and rigid hierarchical social structure and yet can laugh back at the society by way of “celebrating” his so-called failures as “victories.” Recently many Chinese commentators and scholars are using the *Ah Q* and the spirit of spiritual victory in the context of the recent clashes between China and India. According to them, the reason for the Indian belligerence at the India-China border is India's *Ah Q*-like behaviour of seeking “moral victory”. The spiritual victory method is used by India for its self-satisfaction; though Chinese troops continue to occupy North Doklam while Indian soldiers have pulled out of Doklam and returned to their outposts in Sikkim.

Ms. Cherry Hitkari's presentation titled, **“Rocking the Cradle, Ruling the World: Crafting the Ideal Citizen through Children's Songs in the People's Republic of China”**, explored the themes of Children's songs to understand the Party's changing aspirations, threat perceptions and solutions to address them. She pointed out that CPC uses primary education to build citizen loyalty and ensure domestic social stability, which is a major reason behind China's rise. In the early years of the PRC, as Mao Zedong faced the challenge of carrying on the revolutionary spirit, the children's songs were regarded as a medium to build a perception of successful state policy and to show love for socialism. During Deng Xiaoping period, Children songs called for discipline and inculcation of scientific attitude among the children rather than aggressively emphasizing on ideology, and, love for the country, party and socialism. After 1989, national unity and Nationalism dominated the discourse along with economic development. During Xi Jinping era, emphasis on staunch nationalism, viewed as a blend of Confucianism and socialist ethos, became prominent. In the recent years national dream of building a powerful country along with ethnic minorities and national unity appear as a more conspicuous theme of Children's songs. In conclusion she argued that children have been intrinsic to the nature of Chinese nationalism as they represent a malleable force capable of transforming Chinese society. History of PRC show that interpellation through music has been used as a tool to shape the children as its future citizens.

In the presentation titled, **“Military-Civil Fusion in China: A Case Study under Xi Jinping's Era”**, Mr. Prahlad Kumar Singh explored the Military-Civil connection in China from the historical perspective. In the early years, Mao had adopted a balanced approach to military and people. During Deng era, the idea shifted to *junmin jiehe* to promote defence construction and national economy. Jiang promoted the strategy of *yu jun yu min* which located military potential in civilian capabilities. Hu Jintao changed *jiehe* to *ronghe*, to signify a shift from combination to fusion. Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, military-civil fusion has become a crucial aspect of military modernisation and a method of overcoming resource constraints for developmental needs. Mr. Singh argued that military-civil fusion is not new under Xi, but there are historical continuities. The role of Xi Jinping in promoting Military-Civil fusion can be located in setting priorities and overcoming some of the barriers faced by the policy during previous periods. It can be seen in terms of both continued legacy and changes.

Valedictory Session

The Valedictory Session was chaired by **Amb. Vijay Nambiar**, Honorary Fellow, Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi; former Ambassador/High Commissioner of India to China, Pakistan & other countries and former Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations.

In his opening remarks, Amb. Vijay Nambiar extended his heartiest welcome to all participants on behalf of Institute of China Studies (ICS) and the partners for the 15th edition of the All India Conference of China Studies (AICCS). Thereon, he proceeded to introduce the speaker of the valedictory address, Amb. Nirupama Rao and set the tone for her valedictory address. He noted the significance of Amb. Rao's talk considering not only its topicality, but also the fact that during their stint in the Indian Foreign Service they were working together towards the Deng Xiaoping-Rajeev Gandhi meeting of 1988.

In the valedictory address titled, **“Lessons from the last 75 years: India and China”**, Amb. Rao captured the entire tapestry of India-China relationship over the last seventy-five years. She noted the significance of border settlement as being paramount for any hopes of shifting the course of bilateral relationship towards a healthier course. At the same time, she also reflected upon the challenges in course correction given the delay in reaching a negotiated mutually agreeable settlement and what that could mean for the future of India-China relations. Amb. Rao began her presentation by noting that the terrain of India – China relations since 1950 has been an undulating steep dissent mostly, with many promises of a better tomorrow, which have been mostly denied. This series of false expectations after every attempt at resetting ties made one wonder whether everything we see in India-China relations is witnessed through the lens of *deja-vu*. The fact that both these nations travelled a vast distance since 1962 in terms of their national trajectories, only to find ourselves in the same estranged relationship that we were in six decades ago lends further credence to these doubts. When their diplomatic ties were established, India and China were two young and emergent nations with relatively aligned dreams and aspirations. Both were comparatively equals in terms of comprehensive national capabilities. Today however, the asymmetry between them in terms of military and economic strengths is palpable. At the same time, when it comes to discourse power, or the power of ideas, the credibility and sustainability of India's democracy, lends it a much more authentic and legitimate voice than authoritarianism. Amb. Rao argued, India and China are presently in a state of strained co-existence in Asia. India shares a land

border with China that is ridden by dispute and is a scene of escalating military confrontations. Additionally, India's long peninsular coastline of over four and half thousand miles necessitates equally strategic focus on the Indian Ocean where China is increasingly asserting its presence and power. This makes fence mending in the relationship between India and China difficult. However, the fractures in the relationship are by no means a recent creation. According to the speaker, clashes in the border and the eventual fallout was a denouement waiting to happen. She asserted that trouble has always lurked below the surface of relations between India and China, ever since it deteriorated in the late 1950's. Echoing the views of Amb. Nambiar who spoke before her, the speaker noted that the boundary problem between India and China is also entangled with the history and status of Tibet, with which region independent India inherited a whole set of connections and inter-relationships formed during the time of British colonial rule. Moreover, Dalai Lama's residence in India adds an additional layer of complexity to India-China relations. On the other hand, to India's chagrin, China's ambitions in South Asia and its capture of leadership level trust in India's neighbourhood have eroded and taken away from India's interest in the region and made the course of New Delhi's South Asia related diplomacy even more difficult and complex. When these developments in bilateral ties are taken into consideration it seems that on the eve of clashes in Galvan valley in June 2020, the relationship was by no means strong and resilient, and consequently collapsed because of its already weak foundations. The story here is one where two neighbours have co-existed more in confrontation and competitions. Rivalry and lack of mutual trust dictated the relationship more than what was famously termed in Nehru-Chou Enlai era as "peaceful co-existence." Despite the poor health of the present bilateral relationship, the nature of the present inter-dependent world makes it impossible to sever all diplomatic ties like 1962. At the same time, intensified infrastructure building and military build-up along the line of actual control continues to test the resilience of this relationship. From this reality, the speaker foretells three likely future scenarios:

- One, in which the status quo will persist, but in a highly unstable manner.
- Two, an end to the conflict cycle through a grand territorial bargain and the peaceful settlement of the dispute, perhaps very unlikely.
- Third, a small border conflagration, triggering escalation into a wider military conflict, possibly a hot war between India and China.

The situation is unlikely to change until the fundamental basis for the conflict – each country's claims on the other – is settled.

This burden of history in bilateral ties, offers a few lessons for Indian strategic community to make note of, as it shapes the future course of this relationship. This relates both, to the question of Tibet and to the boundaries that separated the two countries

- Lesson one, haste makes waste in diplomacy. Presumption of goodwill is a shortcut to failure to judge the other side. Verification is pre-requisite for the establishment of durable trust.
- Secondly, histories that date back to the Silk Road do not provide a super-structure for modern partnership. Civilisations do clash, ideologies do contend.
- Thirdly, every relationship needs to be examined from the perspective of India's interests in order to find the right balance so that gains outweigh losses.
- Fourthly, now more than ever India needs to invest in China Studies. Despite the friction in its present ties with China, the US continues to maintain extensive network of Chinese language study and people-people exchanges.
- Fifthly, the issues of borderland which form the contact-zones of connectivity, integrative processes and trade and pilgrim linkages need to be brought to the mainstreams of discourse.
- Sixthly, there are lessons to be learnt from negotiating solutions to the core problems that complicate our relations with China. This is a saga of how positions have hardened and ossified over the years. A fatal flaw on India's part in the early years was assuming that the signing of 1954 Agreement on Tibet implies a settled boundary deal.
- Disputes are best settled when they are new and fluid. Every successful negotiation achieves a solution that involves compromise by each side, a sensible calculation of the long-term interests of the relationship and the benefits of trans-national cooperation flowing from the same. The time window for achieving these closes after some time, as it has today in the dispute over our shared boundaries with China.
- Another lesson is that agreements to maintain peace and tranquillity in border areas, like the ones India and China have concluded over the years from 1993 onwards, cannot exist in a vacuum where a boundary settlement is absent, or without a joint verification and

agreement about the location of the Line of Actual Control. This is again a case of verification to precede trust. We are reaping the bitter harvest of such imperfections as we confront the landscape of relations post Galvan.

India is going to have to make such decisions in a world undergoing a power transition. A transition that has pit US-China against each other with such intensity, that it is likely to define the future of the world. Reverberations of this rivalry are felt world-wide including in India. China's unease and suspicion of any cooperation among countries that threatens the overstretch of its military and strategic ambition in the Indo-Pacific is evident. In this context, closer relationship with the US, together with membership of the Quad helps India leverage the regional and global space to deal with the growing threat from China. India's autonomy in world affairs needs to be used astutely in order to signal astutely. At the same time, given that one third of the world population lives in these two countries, long term global challenges like climate change, food, energy and water security cannot be resolved unless these two nations are part of the solution. This necessitates a creation of a framework outside of nationalism that could make healthy cooperation possible despite the differences in bilateral relationship. India's path to great power status necessitates the creation of a stable, sustainable and inclusive future.

The Convener, Prof. Sabaree Mitra concluded the proceedings presenting the **Conference Report**. She noted that the 15th AICCS saw representation of more than 35 institutions and remarkably received more than 900 registrations for the conference. This again is a testament to the growing success of AICCS in bringing together scholars who may not commonly be found at the same location at the same time. Certainly not only discussing China through well-established frameworks and sub-areas, but also in the context of our geo-civilizational and strategic position vis-à-vis the north-eastern part of India, creating a unique interdisciplinary tapestry woven across historical time and space. In terms of academic participation, it was noted that the conference received 142 individual abstracts of both contemporary and enduring relevance. Of these, 73 abstracts were shortlisted, out of which 26 full papers were received. Among these, 15 were selected by the Board of Reviewers for final presentation, through a rigorous process based on importance and singularity of theme, academic standard, feasibility and wide representation. In the fifteen years of its existence, it is common for the exchange of perspective under the aegis of AICCS to grow into new research projects and institutional linkages with the passage of time. She also expressed her resolute belief that the 15th AICCS will be no exception.

Prof. Mitra elaborated that the 15th AICCS had three special panels reflecting diverse interests and concerns, covering themes of regional interactions and strategic significance of cultural connections between institutions both tangible and intangible through history and also reflecting upon the state of China studies in India. There were five thematic panels covering a rainbow spectrum by way of topics and reflected the new innovative interdisciplinary approach that has broken through conventional categories. They indicated that many new and unique themes have captured the attention of the emerging scholars of China Studies in India. It was from these papers that a paper will be selected for the MSB Award, awarded each year in AICCS in celebration of the contribution and legacy of **Prof. Mira Sinha Bhattacharjea, an iconic Indian scholar of China Studies.**

Prof. Mitra ended her address by thanking the partner institutions who made the 15th AICCS a success, including IIT Guwahati, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung New Delhi. She also thanked the Team AICCS that included large group of rapporteurs and volunteers from different institutions, the office and technical staff of ICS and partner institutions and all the Chairs and Discussants and of course the presenters.

On behalf of the organizing institutions a formal Vote of Thanks was proposed by Dr. Joanna Mahjabeen of Department of Political Science, Gauhati University, Guwahati. She thanked all the partner institutions and Team AICCS for an enriching and successful conference. She expressed her special appreciation for the Convener Prof. Sabaree Mitra and the Co-Convener Dr. Pahi Sakia, Prof. Alka Acharya, Prof. Patricia Uberoi, Dr. Reeja Nair, the Core Committee Members, staff and other members of ICS, New Delhi for their excellent leadership, effort and coordination during the past several months leading up to and during the conference. She thanked Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty and Prof. Akhil Ranjan Dutta for their constant engagement and also for initiating the thought of bringing the AICCS to Guwahati. She thanked Prof. Jayanta Krishna Sarmah of the Department of Political Science, Gauhati University, Prof. Saswati Choudhury of Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati, Prof. Sukanya Sharma, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Guwahati, for the help rendered during the course of organising this conference. She expressed her gratitude to Prof. Prasenjit Duara, for delivering the Keynote Address and to Former Ambassador of India to China and Former Foreign Secretary, Government of India, Amb. Nirupama Rao, for the illuminating Valedictory Address. She extended her sincere gratitude to all the Chairs, speakers and discussants for their intellectual

engagements contributing to a rich array of knowledge and diverse perspectives. Dr. Mahjabeen also thanked Amb. Vijay Nambiar for offering his thought-provoking insights and for acting as Chair for the Valedictory Session. Lastly, she expressed her thankfulness to the dedicated team of rapporteurs, technical staff and volunteers from all participating institutions who worked diligently to make the three days of the 15th AICCS virtual conference a grand success.

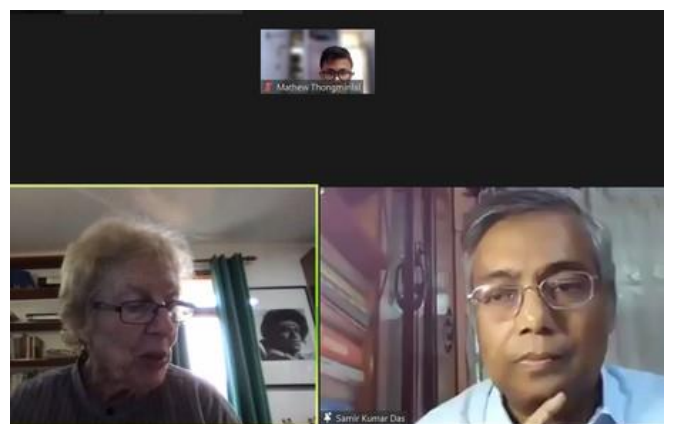
It was announced that the 16th AICCS would be held in Hyderabad in November 2023 in collaboration with the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad. Dr. Bhim Subba, on behalf of the Department of Political Science, University of Hyderabad expressed gratitude on being invited to collaborate with ICS for the 16th AICCS and extended his formal invitation to all scholars and delegates to participate in the event.

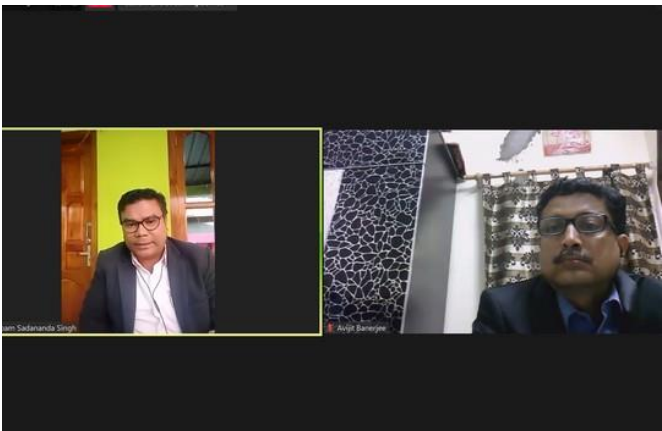
2022 Mira Sinha-Bhattacharjea Award

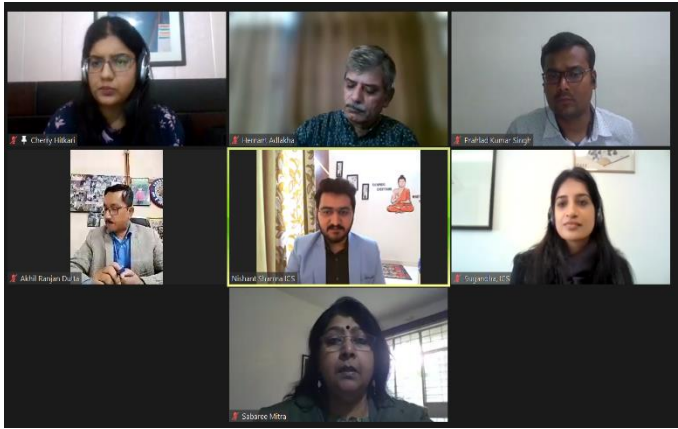
The **2022 Mira Sinha-Bhattacharjea Award** has been conferred upon **Ms. Cherry Hitkari** for her paper titled, “**Rocking the Cradle, Ruling the World: Crafting the Ideal Citizen through Children's Songs in the People's Republic of China**”, which was presented at the 15th All India Conference of China Studies (AICCS) held virtually in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, Gauhati University, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development and the India Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, from 17–19 November 2022.

Ms. Hitkari is currently enrolled in a PG Intensive Advanced Diploma Course in Chinese Language (CF-2) at the Department of East Asian Studies, University of Delhi.

MEDIA GALLERY







INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE



The **Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS)**, New Delhi is an institution engaged in and committed to interdisciplinary research on China. Apart from the annual All India Conference of China Studies (AICCS), the Institute undertakes various collaborative research programs and multilateral initiatives with prominent institutions in India and abroad, and brings together leading and upcoming scholars through multiple fora. Among its many legacies, it has been conducting the iconic Wednesday Seminar for over 50 years and publishes the China Report, a peer-reviewed quarterly journal on China and East Asia, currently in its 58th year of publication.



The **Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati**, the sixth member of the IIT fraternity, was established in 1994. The academic programme of IIT Guwahati commenced in 1995. At present the Institute has eleven departments and five inter-disciplinary academic centres covering all the major engineering, science and humanities disciplines, offering BTech, BDes, MA, MDes, MTech, MSc and PhD programmes. IIT Guwahati has been the only academic institution from India that occupied a place among the top 100 world universities – under 50 years of age – published by London based Times Higher Education (THE) in the year 2014 and continues to do this even today in various International Rankings. Along with older IITs and Delhi University, IIT Guwahati has also been ranked below 500 in the QS World ranking released recently. An important feature of academic excellence is the continuous replenishment of ideas and creation of new areas of research and innovation, attracting organizations seeking collaboration in education, research and development as well as product development.



Gauhati University is one of the premier institutions of higher education in Northeast India and one of the most sought-after postgraduate institutions. It has been the top-ranking institute (placed within top 1.12% of all institutes, as per [NIRF rankings](#)) for six years in a row and is a NAAC A-Grade institution. Great Sanskrit scholar, Indologist and philanthropist Krishna Kanta Handiqui was the founder Vice Chancellor of Gauhati University. Being the oldest and the largest university in the entire Northeast, the university represents the academic and cultural background of the region, on which the other academic institutions of Northeast India started their journey. Being the pioneer educational institute, it extends its hand holding support to all subsequent academic institutions in this region. Gauhati University has been serving as the *Think Tank* for development of entire Assamese Society throughout the history of the university.



Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change and Development (OKDISCD) is an autonomous Institute situated in Guwahati that undertakes, promotes and coordinates research on problems and processes of social transformation and development of Assam and other States of the North Eastern region of India and contributes to the formulation of strategies and programmes for speedier regional development. As envisaged by the founders of the Institute, it acts as a "clearinghouse of ideas and information on research in social sciences with special emphasis on the problems of Assam and other States of the North-

Eastern region". Established in 1989 under the joint initiative of Government of Assam and Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) New Delhi, OKDISCD is recognized as a leader in the field of social science research in Northeast India. It is reputed for the quality of its research and various programmes for promoting social science and policy research. Over the last two and half decades, a large number of studies have been completed by the Institute which has contributed towards the corpus of knowledge on various aspects of social concerns and research priorities in the region. It is noted for its strong research thrust in varied areas of democracy and governance, regional development, health and education, environment, gender, human development that are making substantial contributions to regional and national level.



The **Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung** is a German foundation established in 1955, with its headquarters at Sankt Augustin near Bonn, and also in Berlin. Through political education and counselling, the foundation campaigns worldwide for peace, freedom and justice. Its principal aim is to preserve and promote liberal democracy and strengthen international dialogue. The KAS India Office was established more than 50 years ago and it has been working with Indian partner institutions such as Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), The Energy Research Institute (TERI) and the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS).