

# **International Conference Locating Northeast India: Human Mobility, Resource Flows, and Spatial Linkages**

**Department of Sociology, Tezpur University  
9th-12th January, 2018**

## **About the Conference**

This conference belongs to the series of international conferences on Northeast India, held previously in Sikkim University (Nov. 2016, Gangtok), Jamia Milia Islamia (Feb. 2015, New-Delhi), Univ. Vienna (June 2013, Austria), Univ. Göttingen (Dec. 2011, Germany) and Leiden Univ. (Spring 2006, Netherlands). It hopes to bring together a group of distinguished scholars and social scientists from different disciplines doing innovative research in Northeast India and its adjoining areas of Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal. It also hopes to provide a platform for fruitful interaction between scholars, policy makers, community leaders and activists working in the region.

**Prof. Rehman Sobhan**, founder of Bangladesh's Planning Commission, (widely regarded as one of the founders of Bangladesh who mobilized support internationally for the Liberation war) and Founder Director Centre for Policy Dialogue, Dhaka, has kindly agreed to deliver the inaugural keynote lecture at the conference at Tezpur. Many other distinguished social scientists have already agreed to attend and participate in the conference.

Prof. Chandan Kumar Sharma, Sociology, Tezpur, is the principal organiser of the conference. He will be assisted by the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) and a Local Organising Committee (LOC). The Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) for the conference has the following members:

**Prof. Sanjoy Hazarika, Delhi**  
**Prof. Tanka Subba, Sikkim**  
**Prof. Bengt Karlsson, Stockholm**  
**Prof. Chandan Kumar Sharma, Tezpur**  
**Dr. Philippe Ramirez, Paris**  
**Dr. Erik de Maaker, Leiden**  
**Dr. Melanie Vandenhelsken, Vienna**  
**Dr. Meenaxi Barkataki-Ruscheweyh, Amsterdam (Convenor)**

## **Concept note**

In popular imagination, India's Northeast continues to be regarded as peripheral and remote. Marked by a political culture of violence, the region appears to be characterised by economic stagnation and social conservatism. Recent social scientific research increasingly proves such assumptions wrong. While the long international border that almost entirely encircles India's Northeast suggests enclosure, its people are progressively more mobile. And while the region already has a long history of connectivity to international 'markets', more and more resources open up for commercial exploitation. Moreover, planned and new spatial linkages, which have long been hindered by animosity between the various states in the region, carry the promise of new connectivities.

This conference focuses in particular on ‘flows’ of people, goods and ideas, and how these combine, strengthen or obstruct one another. Northeast India is increasingly emerging as a ‘resource frontier’, that is, a provider of resources newly ‘disengaged’ from its local ownership and made available to global markets (Tsing 2003). New resource ‘chains’ are developing, extending the trajectories that channel investment, labour, profits and consumption. These transform and redefine environmental, economic and developmental interests. Resource mobilization transforms spaces, and the relationships that people maintain to these. It results in economic gain for some, often combined with the deprivation of (many) others. Northeast India has historically and politically come to constitute a region, yet an exploration of its human mobility, resource flows, and spatial linkages forces us to look across borders as well (Van Schendel 2002). This conference intends to ‘localise’ Northeast India amidst the processes outlined above.

**The conference will focus mainly on the following tentative sub-themes:**

- Mapping mobility and migrations in and out of Northeast India
- Transnational interconnections of people, ideas and goods
- Environmental, economic and developmental grounding of mobility and flows
  - The politics of extraction of natural resources
  - Mobility, settlement and the creation of new resources (roads for example)
- Politics of mobility and regulation of transnational flows
- The historical construction of the area and of Northeast India as an area study
- Ideologies and the fabric of modernity (media, fashion, music)



A bird's eye view of Tezpur University

## FIRST CALL FOR PAPERS AND PANELS

We would like to invite submissions for both panels as well as individual papers on the issues relevant to the theme of the conference (as described in the concept note). We would like to invite in particular, papers and panels on themes related to state policy, environment and ecology, economics and management. We also especially welcome papers and panels on new emerging areas of research interest in the northeast.

Scholars wishing to participate in the conference can do so in two ways:

1. Submit a panel proposal by sending us a conceptually innovative short abstract of up to 250 words on a topic related to the theme of the conference by 1 May 2017.

Each panel will have 3 or 4 paper presentations, and will be followed by a focussed discussion. If you know of other researchers who might want to present in your panel, please include their names and preferably also their abstracts (for papers) along with your submission. Ideally, panel proposers will be the convenor, and also the discussant, of their panel. If you want another person to act as discussant, then please indicate the name of the discussant and whether he/she has agreed to be the discussant.

2. Submit a paper by sending us an abstract (of about 500 words) on a topic relevant to the theme of the conference, by 1 June 2017, indicating which panel you would like to join, if already known.

Both panel and paper submissions should be accompanied by the name, address and contact details, institutional affiliation and academic status of the applicant.

While a conference participant is welcome to submit more than one panel proposal as described above, he/she can present a paper in only one panel and can be a discussant in only one panel (in which he/she is not presenting).

All panel submissions will be reviewed by the Academic Advisory Committee (AAC) and the accepted panel proposals will be circulated by the 15 May, 2017. Note that acceptance of a panel does not automatically imply acceptance of the papers submitted along with it. All abstracts of papers submitted will be peer-reviewed. Presenters of papers accepted for presentation will be informed by 1 August 2017. The organisers reserve the right to modify the constitution of the panels by accommodating the best papers received on the subject.

Each scholar will have at least 15 minutes for their presentation; each full panel will have at least 30 minutes for discussion. The selected papers will be circulated at least within each panel, before the start of the conference.

### **PhD Seminar:**

Prior to the conference, on the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> January 2018, there will be a PhD seminar for PhD scholars as well as for fresh postdocs pursuing research on the Northeast in a social science discipline. We expect 5-6 distinguished experts from different social science disciplines to act as resource persons for the seminar. We foresee inviting around 30 participants who will work together on themes selected by the resource persons, in sessions lasting between 2-3 hours each.

Please let us know if you are interested in joining the PhD Seminar, attaching

(a) a brief CV, (b) a statement about your current research (not more than 500 words) and (c) your reasons in brief for wanting to join the PhD seminar.

### **Registration Fees:**

Conference registration fees will be Rs. 500 (PhD scholars without fellowship, unemployed) /Rs. 1500 (all others). The registration fees for the PhD Seminar will be Rs. 500. If any participant of the PhD Seminar also registers for the Conference, the conference fee will be lowered to Rs. 300. These are the rates for early birds and will go up closer to the time.

### **Funding:**

The conference will begin on the evening of the 9<sup>th</sup> January and end by lunchtime of the 12<sup>th</sup> January 2018. All selected participants will be provided local hospitality in Tezpur, during the duration of the conference/PhD seminar. Depending on the availability of funds, financial support for travel may be given for domestic travel to those who have no other sources of funding. Only those selected conference participants who have submitted their full papers within the deadline set (1 November 2017) will be eligible for consideration for funding. Names of participants who register after 1 November 2017 will also not be included in the conference abstract book.



University Guest House

## **Tezpur: A Brief Overview**

Situated on the north bank of the mighty Brahmaputra, interspersed with green hills and hillocks, parks and lakes, Tezpur, the headquarters of Sonitpur district, is a beautiful town in the middle of the state of Assam. It is located 190 km east of Guwahati, the capital city of Assam. It takes around 4 hours by road to cover this distance.

Tezpur is a city steeped in history, mythology and folklore. The city abounds in archaeological sites, ancient relics apart from scenic beauty. It is also a transit for tourists visiting Arunachal Pradesh, especially the famous Buddhist monastery at Tawang. The world famous Kaziranga National Park is located 55 km east of Tezpur while the Nameri National Park is located 40 km north of it.

During the early part of January, the average minimum and maximum temperatures of Tezpur range between 8°C and 23°C. So, woollens are recommended for visitors to the town during that time. The sunrise and sunset hours during the above-mentioned period are 6 AM and 4.45 PM respectively.

## **About Tezpur University**

Established in 1994, Tezpur University has achieved certain academic distinctiveness in the short span of its existence. The University was conferred the Visitor's Best University Award 2016 among all the central universities of India. The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) of the ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, ranked the University 5<sup>th</sup> among top 100 universities in India for the year 2016. The Times Higher Education World University Rankings has placed Tezpur University within 150 in the list of 200 top universities of the world under 50 years old. In the subcategory "Generation Y" that comprises universities established between 1986 and 1999, Tezpur University has been placed at the 34<sup>th</sup> position in the list of top 50 universities. With 3800 students, 260 faculty members and 280 administrative and technical personnel, the university today is a hub of quality activities in higher education and research.

## **Important Details**

**Place of the conference:** Tezpur University, Assam

**Dates of the PhD Seminar:** 8-9 January 2018

**Deadline for submission of request for participating in the PhD Seminar:** 1 June 2017

**Dates of the conference:** 9-12 January 2018

**Submission deadline for panel abstracts:** 1 May 2017

**Decision regarding acceptance of panels by** 15 May 2017

**Submission deadline for paper abstracts:** 1 June 2017

**Decision regarding acceptance of papers by** 1 August 2017

**End of early bird registration:** 1 November 2017

**Submission deadline for full papers:** 1 November 2017

For more information, please write to the organisers at **neconftezpur@gmail.com**. Please put 'paper submission', 'panel proposal', 'Ph.D. seminar application' or 'query' in the subject heading, to help us sort your messages and to respond to them faster.



School of Humanities and Social Sciences Building