

Hill College initiates study on Darjeeling, Eastern Himalayas



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Salesian College Sonada (estd 1938) is holding an international interdisciplinary conference on Darjeeling and the Eastern Himalayas: A Multidisciplinary Approach from 14th to 15th March 2017. Of 60 abstracts received 48 papers are being presented in three parallel and technical sessions.

Sikkim Central University Vice Chancellor [Prof](#) Tanka Bahadur Subba, inaugurated the conference, and Director of Himalayan Study Centre at North Bengal University [Prof](#) Karubaki Datta delivered the key note address.

Resource persons, scholars and participants from [India](#), [Bangladesh](#), Nepal and Bhutan are participating in the two day seminar. “This is also a forum for scholars of the region to meet and exchange information on their academic pursuits to reflect and contribute towards what the region is undergoing,” says Rotarian Udaya Mani Pradhan from Darjeeling, a prime mover behind the conference.

Eastern Himalayan borderland encompasses a geographical and cultural mosaic that stretches from eastern Nepal, Sikkim, Darjeeling Hills, Bhutan to [Arunachal](#) Pradesh. Cradled between the dominant cultures of northern [India](#) and southern Tibet, the eastern Himalayan borderland has geographical proximity with mountainous areas like Sikkim, Bhutan, and Tawang in north western [Arunachal](#) Pradesh. “The [conference](#) christened ‘Explorations into Eastern Himalayas’ is aimed at bringing forth issues and perspectives on the eastern Himalayas, which for the purposes of this [conference](#) extends from eastern Nepal to Bhutan,” says [Conference](#) Coordinator Assistant Professor Terence Mukhia.

Speaking on the objectives of the conference [Principal](#) Dr George Thadathil says, “The conference aims to challenge perspectives, contribute to existing body of knowledge and provide a common platform for researchers working on the region.”

Dr Thadathil adds, “The conference will facilitate the convergence of researchers from different countries, studying different aspects of the eastern Himalayas. It will also enable exchange of ideas and dissemination of knowledge and promotion of further research on the region which experienced migration from Tibet to Darjeeling and Sikkim; and engage scholars study the contemporary contestants to hegemony in the hills with the hope of presenting newer ways of understanding the region and exploring the commonalities and differences between the peoples.”

Divided into three parallel panel sessions key themes for the conference include titles like Histories and Memories; Culture and Identity; Trade, [Economy](#), Exchange and Migration; Folk and Popular Culture; Industries, [Development](#) and Sustainability; Gender, Society and Modernity; and [Education](#), Language & Literature. Characteristic of the region is the migration of people from Nepal to Sikkim, Darjeeling, Bhutan and the north-eastern frontier regions making Kalimpong town [as](#) an important trading centre between southern Tibet and British government in Bengal.

The contemporary political history of the region is marked by strengthening of political borders, Sino-[India](#) conflict in 1962, the merger of Sikkim with the [India](#) in 1975, the ongoing political agitation for Gorkhaland, spread of the Maoist movement in eastern Nepal and the expulsion of the Lhotsampas from Bhutan. These events lend dynamism to the eastern Himalaya borderland and have made it a site of intense contestation for space, legitimacy, resources and identity amongst other things.

Inaugural session also marked the release of Nepali translation of the book 'Brahma Sri Narayana Guru' by T. Bhaskaran translated by [Prof George Thadathil](#) for [Sahitya Akademi](#).



CM Paul

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BY CM PAUL

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