

Re-envisioning Inner Asia

A Student-Faculty Seminar on “Re-envisioning Inner Asia” was organized on 30 September 2013 by Central Asian Area Studies Programme, Centre for Inner Asian Studies, School of International Studies, JNU. The Seminar Coordinator was Dr. Mahesh Ranjan Debata. The inaugural session was chaired by Prof. Girijesh Pant, Dean, SIS. Prof. K. Warikoo gave the introductory remarks about the Centre for Inner Asian studies and talked about the concurrent issues within the global scenario affecting Inner Asia. Prof. Mondira Dutta, Chairperson, Centre for Inner Asian Studies, welcomed all the guests, including Prof. Devendra Kaushik and Prof. Mahavir Singh.

Prof. S.K. Sopory, Vice Chancellor, JNU, while delivering the inaugural remarks, emphasized on the importance of science and technology in research studies. He stressed upon the importance of studying China’s acquisition of land on lease from Central Asian Republics and how it would impact India. Prof. Devendra Kaushik, in his keynote address, introduced the Inner Asian nomenclature, its history which existed even before the advent of Islam and spoke about a multi-cultural heritage, religion and pluralism. He narrated the battle field of geopolitical new Great Game that has made this region a hub of many activities. Referring to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s declaration in 2002, Prof. Kaushik said, “India considers China as a strategic and economic partner, and not as its enemy.” He emphasized that Central Asia needs to be given ample consideration in our foreign policy. Prof. Kaushik talked about scholars spreading myths about Inner Asian region. Citing Chinese scholar—Chu Tsi’s book “East and West”, he talked about Indianization of China in terms of cultural borrowings. He quoted Shri Rabindra Nath Tagore who found Indian paintings in Chinese craft and architecture and said “I find India everywhere but can’t recognize”. Prof. Kaushik suggested to seek a triangular relationship between India, China and Russia in order to bring a multi-oriented global scenario and said that in the 21st century, these countries can together surpass the United States in terms of development and power. Dr. Sharad K. Soni gave the vote of thanks.

The first technical session was chaired by Prof Mahavir Singh, Dean, Humanities and Social Science, Gautam Buddha University. He talked about security issues in today’s scenario and Afghanistan after withdrawal of US-NATO forces. The session consisted of six speakers who spoke on various issues related to trans-national security threats, European Union’s Central Asian policy, micro financing, hydro-politics and Mongolian foreign policy. Meha Pant emphasized on the need for an integrated regional approach to address issues related to transnational problems of terrorism, state corruption and drug trafficking. Madan Yadav spoke on the role of European Union in the development of infrastructure, security and enhancement of regional stability in Central Asia. Alok Kumar talked about micro financing in Uzbekistan and stressed that despite being a small-level financing, these initiatives gave a boost to Uzbekistan’s economy and promoted public-private partnership. Srinivas Mishra gave a detailed overview of hydro-politics of Central Asia. He elaborated upon the huge potential of water in Amu Darya basin and said that Central Asian states need to address water-related issues urgently for a proper allocation

with an integrated regional approach. Malini P Sethi examined the prospects of tourism in Kazakhstan where India can play an important role particularly in the light of enhancing accessibility and amenities. Vaishali Krishna spoke about the new dimensions of Mongolia's foreign policy highlighting the need for an adaptive approach to the ever-changing economic and political scenario.

The post-lunch session was chaired by Dr. Ambrish Dhaka. This session had four paper presenters, who spoke on Afghanistan, Tibet and Xinjiang. Gunjan Priya talked over the importance of Afghanistan in inner Asian geopolitics mentioning that in the multi-polar geopolitics, Inner Asia's role has become more crucial. Alka talked about ethnic issues as the root cause of political turbulence in Afghanistan. While talking about role of Tibet in the changing relations between India and China, Sanjukta Maharana stressed on the need for a humanitarian stand of India on Tibetan issues. Rajesh Singh outlined the importance of Xinjiang as a factor in Kazakhstan-China energy cooperation and reiterated the need to enhance regional integration. Dr. Ambrish Dhaka spoke about Mackinder's Heartland theory with reference to Central Asia and Afghanistan and highlighted the ethnic problems in Afghanistan. Dr. Tsetan Namgyal gave the vote of thanks. The report was prepared by Gunjan Priya, Research Scholar of the Centre.



