

Brief Report of XI International Geographical Union Commission Seminar
Organised by
Department of Geography, B.Borooah College, Guwahati
Date: 08 to 10 February, 2018

The XI International Geographical Union (IGU) Commission Seminar has been organised by Department of Geography, B.Borooah College from 8 to 10 February, 2018. The Seminar has been jointly organised with XXIX North East India Geographical Society (NEIGS) Biennial Conference collaborated by Commonwealth Geographical Bureau (CGB) and six IGU Commissions *viz.* Commission on Biogeography and Biodiversity, Commission on Land Use/Land Cover Change, Commission on Local and Regional Development, Commission on Geo-Heritage, Commission on Geography of Governance, Commission on Agricultural Geography and Land Engineering and Soil and Water Assessment Tool (SWAT).

The IGU is the parent body and an international non-governmental, professional organization engaged in the development of the discipline of Geography. IGU is devoted to promote Geography through initiating and coordinating geographical research and teaching throughout the world by network of its National Committees, Commissions and Task Forces. The first International Geographical Congress met in 1871 in Antwerp, subsequently leading to establishment of IGU in 1922 in Brussels. IGU has 41 commissions working in various sub-disciplines of Geography ranging from physical aspects of the earth to socio-economic issues.

This prestigious IGU Commission Seminar has been organised for the first time in this part of the country on a grand scale at B. Borooah College. The organising committee received 680 numbers of abstracts across the globe. After a peer review of all the abstracts 556 abstracts have been accepted for oral presentation and 28 abstracts have been accepted for poster presentation. The seminar has been attended by around 750 participants including 480 paper presenters, 63 chairpersons and co-chairpersons including speakers and 200 general participants including students. It is pertinent to state that 37 foreign delegates and 4 foreign students from 12 different countries like Canada, West Indies, Nigeria, Italy, Poland, Japan, Myanmar, Singapore, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan etc. have actively participated in the said event. Moreover, the rest of the participants were from all over India representing 113 different institutions. The participation of such a huge number from all across the globe made the seminar a truly global one.

The inaugural ceremony of the event has been graced by the eminent scholars of the globe *viz.* Prof. Yukio Himiyama, President, IGU, Prof. Elena dell' Agnese, Vice President, IGU, Prof. R.B Singh, Vice President, IGU and Prof. Thomas Hope Elizabeth, President CGB. The ceremony began in a solemn manner with the welcome speech by others present in the podium *viz.* Dr. Satyendra Nath Barman, Principal, B.Borooah College, Prof. Abani Kumar Bhagabati, President, NEIGS, Dr. Nripendra Ram Kalita, Head, Geography Department, B.Borooah College and Dr. Dhanjit Deka, Joint Convenor of the seminar. All total 53 technical sessions in seven venues, 4 plenary sessions, 3 panel discussions and 1 keynote lecture has been organised in the three daylong events. About 480 participants have presented their research papers and 18 participants have actively participated in the poster session. The seminar also hosted late Dr. Manju Singh memorial young scientist poster award for young geographers organised under aegis of IGU task force for young and early career geographers. The competition has been judged by Prof. Yukio Himiyama, President, IGU, Prof. Elena dell' Agnese, Vice President, IGU and Dr. Manoj Hazarika, Director, Student Welfare, Cotton University. The key note speech on "The birth of International Science Council and the IGU" has been delivered by Prof. Yukio Himiyama, President, IGU and Professor, Hokkaido University of Education, Japan on 08/02/2018. In his illuminating speech, he enlightened the audience about the history and activities of IGU at global level. The first plenary lecture was delivered by Prof. Elena dell' Agnese, Vice President, IGU and Professor, University of Milano, Italy on 08/02/2018. Prof Agnese delivered her lecture on "Towards Eco Critical Geography? Landscapes of Disaster and Environmental Discourse in post-Apocalyptic Narratives". The session was very interactive where a studious discussion took place among the speaker and the august gathering. The second plenary lecture was delivered by Professor Jerzy Banský, Head, IGU Commission on Local and Regional Development and Professor, Polish Academy of Science, Poland. Prof. Banský in his speech on "Agricultural Land Use under the influence of processes of Privatisation in the Central Europe" widely discussed the issues of land use change and its effect due to the urbanisation and industrialization of the Central European region. Another very interesting plenary lecture on "Integrated Basin management on Regional Framework for the Brahmaputra River, Northeast India: An Appraisal" has been delivered by Prof. Dulal Ch. Goswami, Ex Professor, Gauhati University. The lecture has been followed by a discussion where a large number of issues have been raised by well-known scholars across the globe. The last plenary lecture on "Environment and livelihoods for achieving Sustainable Development Goals in North East India" has been delivered by Prof. R.B Singh, Vice President, IGU and Professor,

Delhi University. In his lecture Professor Singh addressed the present status and its changing scenario of Biodiversity of North East India and suggested different approach for sustainable development of the same. The panel discussion on Challenges to Sustainability across Commonwealth under the aegis of Commonwealth Geographical Bureau (CGB) was held on 09/02/2018 has been chaired by Prof. Thomas Hope Elizabeth, President, CGB, where 11 invited speakers from different commonwealth countries have delivered their lecture on various global issues. The Paramnanda Kalita memorial panel discussion on Geography Education: Its contemporary relevance has been chaired by Prof. Abani Kumar Bhagabati, President, NEIGS. Four eminent scholars from North East India have delivered their lecture on the above mentioned theme in the said panel discussion. The third panel discussion on “Environment and Sustainable Development has been chaired by Prof. Yukio Himiyama, President, IGU where a large number of foreign as well as national delegates discussed the contemporary issues in relation to the main focal theme of the seminar. Under the focal theme “environment and sustainable livelihood” the research papers, invited lectures, plenary lectures and the keynote speech have addressed and discussed the issues like climate change; bio-diversity; land use change; changing mountain environment; natural hazards and extreme events; population growth and urbanization; globalization, industrialization and environment; agriculture and bio-technology; ethnic conflicts in North East; remote sensing and GIS in weather monitoring development; geopolitics and conflict resolution; gender health and inequality; integrated river basin management; pollution and environment; mining, development and sustainability. The seminar culminated with a Valedictory Session on 10-02-2018. Along with the Valedictory Session an open session of North East India Geographical Society (NEIGS) also took place. 36 retired teachers from Northeast India have been felicitated. In addition to the academic activities, a cultural programme has also been organised in the evening of 09/02/2018 and it was dedicated in the name of legendary singer Dr. Bhupen Hazarika. Traditional group songs and folk dances have been performed by the students of B.Borooah College and it has been well appreciated by all. In addition, tours for general participants to different locations across northeast and a local field study has been organised especially for the IGU executives including President and vice presidents to the mighty river Brahmaputra where they enjoyed the scenic beauty through travelling by local ferry service.

Finally, the seminar ends with a hope and belief that this kind of intellectually stimulating exercise and thoughtful discussion will bring the much needed knowledge,

practices and approach for sustainable development of the country in general and north east in particular. The XI International Geographical Union (IGU) Commission Seminar on “Environment and Sustainable Livelihood” discussed and proposed the following recommendations:

1. With changing climate, landscape, land use and demography, the seminar observes that the dynamic process of monitoring, predictions and modelling mechanism be evolved using earth observation, remote sensing, geographical information system and participatory field observation.
2. There is a need to develop a state of art in the form of a manual for diagnosticating and prognosticating land use transformation and sustainability factors.
3. Sustainable livelihood indicators based on people’s knowledge and people’s preferences are identified based on local geographic situation and condition.
4. A critical approach for improving our understanding of local people, places and planet with partnership of social science and scientific discourses.
5. An interactive and dynamic relationship between bottom up and top down approaches be harmonised by integrating different stake holders at different geographical and government levels.
6. Considering existence of rich bio-diversity in the North East of India, the seminar realizes that an integrated understanding of bio-diversity and cultural diversity is accomplished through local knowledge and crowd sources.
7. The sustainable livelihood indicators require people’s perceptions based development for enhancing livelihood, health and nutritional security.
8. Success stories and best practices of the North East region particularly organic tea cultivation in Assam, mother’s market in Manipur, ecotourism and bio-diversity education, natural resource endowment and inland fishing.
9. Disasters are increasing rapidly due to population pressure, anthropogenic activities and rapid economic development with climate change. The seminar suggests adopting local resilience model for achieving the goals of Sendai framework of the disaster risk reduction.
10. Education, Training and skill development- The seminar feels that formal and informal education especially school education and functional literacy continues to be a focal point of sustainable livelihood through bringing local resource based skilled development and scientific and social entrepreneurship.

11. Considering high prospects of hydropower, wind power and renewable energy the seminar encourages new renewable energy sources as an alternative.
12. The seminar realizes that influencing human behaviour through enhancing value system in society at all levels be promoted and environmental stewardship ethics and civic sense for both people and policy makers.
13. The young participants of the seminar feel that IGU should decentralise and disseminate regional developmental and local activities in order to develop hierarchical arrangement and geographical integration in order to develop networking linkages with local stake holder so that grass root ideas be transmitted to the policy makers.
14. The seminar realizes that geo-spatial technology should be used as an effective tool for achieving measureable sustainable development indicators and IGU researches.
15. The seminar recommends participants and people to use widely IGU newsletter, IGU Facebook and IGU commission website in order to know activities of the International Geographical Union and its task forces.
16. Indian participation in the IGU Geography Olympiad has been encouraged to inculcate geographical knowledge to young geographers.
17. The seminar recommends the formation of some working groups for developing module for achieving above mentioned recommendations so that effective implementation could be achieved through participatory process.

Lastly, we acknowledge the support and help received from different government agencies like DST (SERB), Govt of India, ICSSR (New Delhi), ICSSR (Shillong), ISRO, NESAC, ASTEC, INSA etc. in successful organisation of such a prestigious event at B.Borooah College, Guwahati. We are very much thankful to Prof. R. B Singh, Vice President, IGU for giving us the opportunity to host the prestigious IGU Commission seminar at B. Borooah College for the year 2018. Our sincere thanks goes to all the executive members of IGU including Prof. Yukio Himiyama, President, IGU, Prof. Elena dell' Agnese, Vice President, IGU, Prof. R.B Singh, Vice President, IGU and Prof. Thomas Hope Elizabeth, President CGB for their kind presence during the event. We appreciate the collaboration and support of North East India Geographical Society (NEIGS). We also acknowledge the support of Chairpersons, Heads and Secretaries of different IGU Commission for rendering their academic collaboration in organising the event. We extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to all the foreign delegates across the world for their

presence and for making the event a truly international one. We express our thanks to all the participants from India for showing their interest and active participation throughout the event. Lastly, our token of appreciation goes to Dr. Satyendra Nath Barman, Principal, B.Borooah College for his constant support, guidance and all possible help in making the event successful. We reserve a word of appreciation and gratitude for all the members of the organising committee, faculty members of B. Borooah College, office staff of B. Borooah College, Volunteers, students and countless individual for their kind support and guidance.

(Dr. Dhanjit Deka)

(Dr. N.R.Kalita)

Joint Convenor, Organising Committee, IGU Commission Seminar, Guwahati, 2018