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FACT CHECK ...

IIT Gandhinagar to organise research seminar in Dibang Valley of Arunachal Pradesh

The Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (IITGN) is organising Dibang Research Seminar: 'Initiating Dialogue Between Idu Mishmi and Research Scholars' on December 10 and 11, 2019 at Anini, Dibang Valley district, Arunachal Pradesh.

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India Today Web Desk

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There has been an increase in the number of researchers, NGOs, research institutions and university students visiting the borderlands of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly to carry out wildlife surveys. Field researchers visiting such remote areas often take help from the local communities. Young men and women from the local communities participate in research projects as guides, translators and interlocutors, field assistants and guides, whose inputs significantly shape the research. Contributions from the local community often lie buried as acknowledgments in the PhD theses, books, reports and scientific papers. The scholarly articles that come out of these studies are shared and presented at national and international forums. Ironically, such research is hardly or never written or presented for and sometimes, not even shared with the local community members. This seminar aims to create a platform for researchers (biologists, anthropologists and other social scientists) working in Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh to share their research with the residents of the district, the Idu Mishmi community. The seminar addresses a larger question of 'the role of field research and researchers and their contributions' to the society, especially the marginal and indigenous peoples.

WHEN
10-11 DECEMBER 2019

WHERE
ANINI, DIBANG VALLEY DISTRICT,
ARUNACHAL PRADESH

aniseminar2019@gmail.com

For more information
<http://events.iitgn.ac.in/2019/dibangseminar/>

 Humanities and Social Sciences
IIT Gandhinagar  SSRC

Dibang Research Seminar will be held on December 10 and 11 at Anini, Dibang Valley district, Arunachal Pradesh.

The Humanities and Social Sciences discipline at the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (IITGN) is organising Dibang Research Seminar: 'Initiating Dialogue Between Idu Mishmi and Research Scholars' on December 10 and 11, 2019 at Anini, Dibang Valley district, Arunachal Pradesh. The seminar aims to create a platform for researchers (biologists, anthropologists, and other social scientists) working in Dibang Valley district to share their research with the residents of the district, the Idu Mishmi community.

Around 12 resource persons from various organizations such as Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Gauhati University, Aranyak (Guwahati), IITGN, and scholars, leaders and shaman priests from the Idu Mishmi community will be conducting the sessions.

The seminar aims:

- To initiate a dialogue between the local community and the researchers to share their research findings

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- To identify new areas of research with an emphasis on community needs and interests
- To discuss innovative ideas through which community becomes knowledge-partners and stewards of the research carried out on their society and landscape

Giving more information, Prof Ambika Aiyadurai, Assistant Professor in Social Sciences at IITGN and Coordinator of the Seminar said, "This is not just a seminar about "giving back" to the community, but several researchers feel the need to engage with the community in such a way that the research outcomes become a valuable resource for the Idu Mishmi. This seminar intends to initiate a dialogue and explore new ways for collaboration with the Idu Mishmi."

The scholars who have carried out research on various socio-ecological aspects of Dibang Valley are invited to present and share their research for the Idu Mishmis. The members of Idu Mishmi community, Forest Officials, community leaders, representations from the local institutions, Gaon Burrahs (village headmen), Anchal Samiti Members, and Zilla Parishad Members are invited to participate.

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This seminar is supported by the Social Science Research Council Transregional Research Junior Scholar Fellowship with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (US).

Context of the Seminar:

Individual researchers, NGOs, research institutions and university students are increasingly visiting the borderlands of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly to study biodiversity, human-wildlife relations, and tiger ecology. Field researchers visiting remote areas often take help from the local community including school teachers, village headmen, local NGOs, local government officials, and individual host families.

Their inputs significantly shape research projects, but it is hardly written or presented for them and sometimes, not even shared with the local community members.

Most researchers admit that there is a big gap between what researchers gain from the communities and what they are able to give back to them. This seminar is an attempt to fill in that gap and initiate a dialogue with the Idu Mishmi to understand new ways of doing research in the form of collaboration and to exchange ideas, more importantly, making the Idu Mishmi as knowledge partners and letting them have the ownership of the research.

About the Idu Mishmi Community:

The Idu Mishmi is one of the major indigenous groups of Arunachal Pradesh. They inhabit the Lower Dibang and Dibang Valley districts. Idu Mishmis are also included within the larger Mishmi group (Digaru and Miju Mishmis). Idu Mishmi society is undergoing a transition phase with fast-paced development in the form of infrastructural expansion, construction of dams and hydro-electric projects.

There are concerns among the members that their way of living, belief system, local customs, and language are in danger. Their belief system is animism, in which they believe that non-humans such as animals and spirits have the same capacities of conscious

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decision-making as humans do. Some of the beliefs ensure that wildlife is not over hunted, even if the forests are community-owned. The Idu Mishmi social practices are known to indirectly help the conservation of some of the most endangered animals, including the tiger, which is considered Idu Mishmis' brother.

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