



North-East India **WATER TALK 2.0**

MAJULI, 30TH SEPT TO 3RD OCT., 2023



BEHIND ALL THE THINGS

Water, nature's gift to all life forms, is in acute crisis all over the world. Though water forms about 70 per cent of the earth's surface cover, nearly 97 per cent of water is saline and stored in oceans; barely three percent is freshwater. However, due to mining, deforestation and other human activities as well as the climate change, much of freshwater and aquatic biodiversity has depleted at an alarming rate, and in near future, the situation may trigger protracted conflicts world-wide over the rights, access and control of the water.

Ironically, being a rainfed region and endowed with plenty of rainfall, large rivers, and numerous mountain streams, the people in India's northeastern part are generally indifferent to water issues, especially related to its availability, access, policy, governance and its management. As a result, the responsibility and decision-making about all kinds of water works has been left to the government and its various departments. However, more often than not, the government decisions, policies and actions concerning water adversely affect people's lives and livelihoods.

In this backdrop, a couple of years ago, a group of youth, activists, journalists and development professionals-initiated dialogues, known as North East Water Talks, to understand and deliberate on water issues at the grassroots level and create awareness among various stakeholders, particularly among the communities about the need for their participation in decision-making and collective action to address the water issues. The process led to a series of consultations and documentation of local water issues across the northeastern states, which culminated in the regional workshop at Majuli, the only island district of Assam.

Talks on water were not limited only to discussing different aspects of usages and management of water but also expanded to cover subjects like literature, history, politics, identity, and bio-cultural diversity and heritage of the region. Multiple interests and actors influence water management and policy-making. To understand these interests, it was felt important to carry out extensive documentation, research as well as collate all the ways as to how people and communities negotiate and live with water. It is also crucial to have a very good understanding of policies that govern water.

The objective of holding the regional water talk was to provide a platform for connecting the voices of all those people who had been working passionately on water issues in different parts of the region. It was hoped that this cross-disciplinary dialogue and engagement would help in improving understanding the status of water issues and adopting effective approaches to address them at multiple levels.

In short, the Majuli Water Talk aimed at:

- (i) **A better understanding** of the various issues related to water in the Northeast region.
- (ii) **Collaboration and strengthening of the network** of water workers, activists, and researchers.
- (iii) **Building consensus for an integrated vision** towards decentralisation of water governance in the region.
- (iv) **Exploring strategies to carry forward** the works for future interventions.



Why Majuli ?

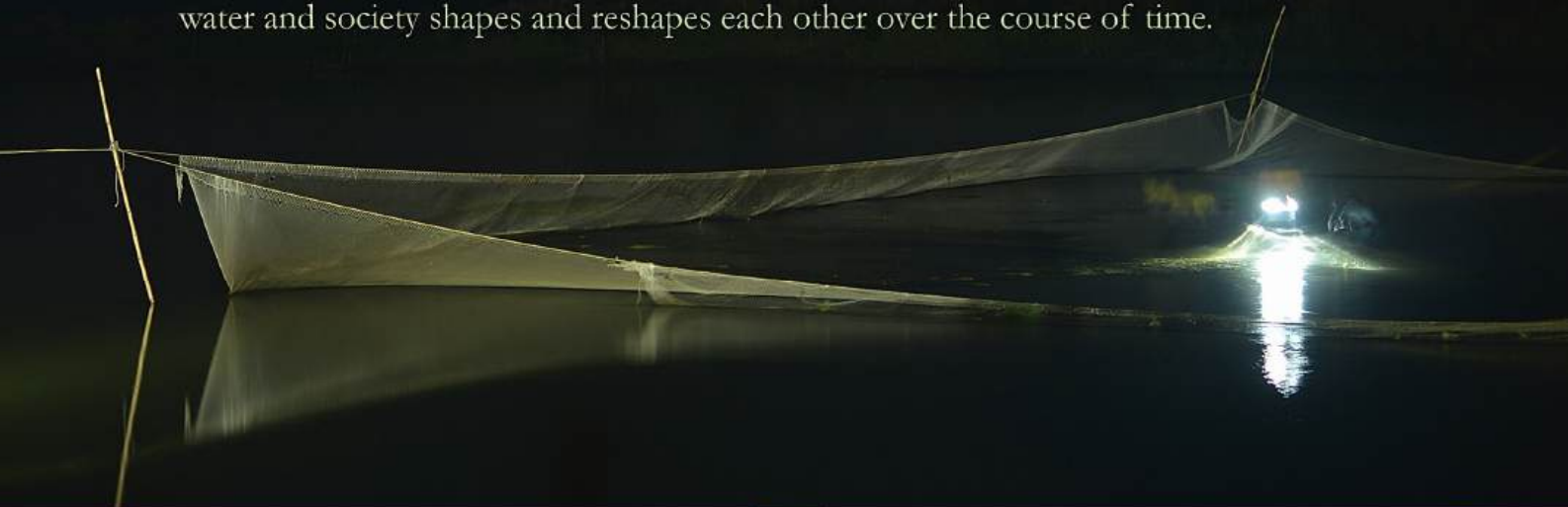
Said to be one of the largest river islands in the world, Majuli is renowned for its unique cultural heritage as the cradle of Assam's neo-Vaishnavite Satriya tradition. Its riverine landscapes have been shaped by the shifting flows of the mighty Brahmaputra, which binds this island from the south and east, while the river Subansiri holds it from the west, and Kherkutia xuti from the north.

Located at the heart of Assam, the island remarkably carries all geological, hydrological and ecological signatures, but bears the brunt of all nature's fury, especially the devastating floods and river bank erosion. In the past several decades, the majestic island has lost nearly 400 sq.km of land to the Brahmaputra. At the same time, Majuli has also rewarded with abundance of natural wealth; the fine sands carried by the Brahmaputra to its distant course; it also has the sticky alluvial soil that produces the finest of rice grains. The 880 Sq. km long island presents diverse landforms and waterscapes -- the swampy wetlands and clear streamlets, muddy rivers and grass filled lakes. Besides, it is home to many indigenous tribal communities with vibrant colourful cultural life. Majuli promises to show that exquisite relationship between water and the communities, which influenced each other over the course of time.

The North-East regional Water Talk conclave at Majuli was consciously thought off to offer the visiting delegates a glimpse of the unique syncretic tradition and culture of Assam (propagated by the Assamese saints - Sankardeva and Madhab Dev) and also expose them to the challenges posed by the vagaries of nature such as the recurring floods and riverbank erosion, and the travails of the riverine communities.

Interestingly, on the day of their arrival, the visitors were greeted with a heavy shower accompanied with strong wind! Next morning, the delegates were divided in two groups for a guided tour around the island to familiarise them with the local culture, craft and its natural surroundings.

Majuli promises to show us that exquisite relation between water and society- or how water and society shapes and reshapes each other over the course of time.





Dakhinpat Satra was established by Banamali Dev Goswami in 1654 under the patronage of Ahom King Jayadhwaj Singha.

After the breakfast the delegates were grouped into two parties for the field visits

Group A:

Dakhinpat Satra & Salmara village

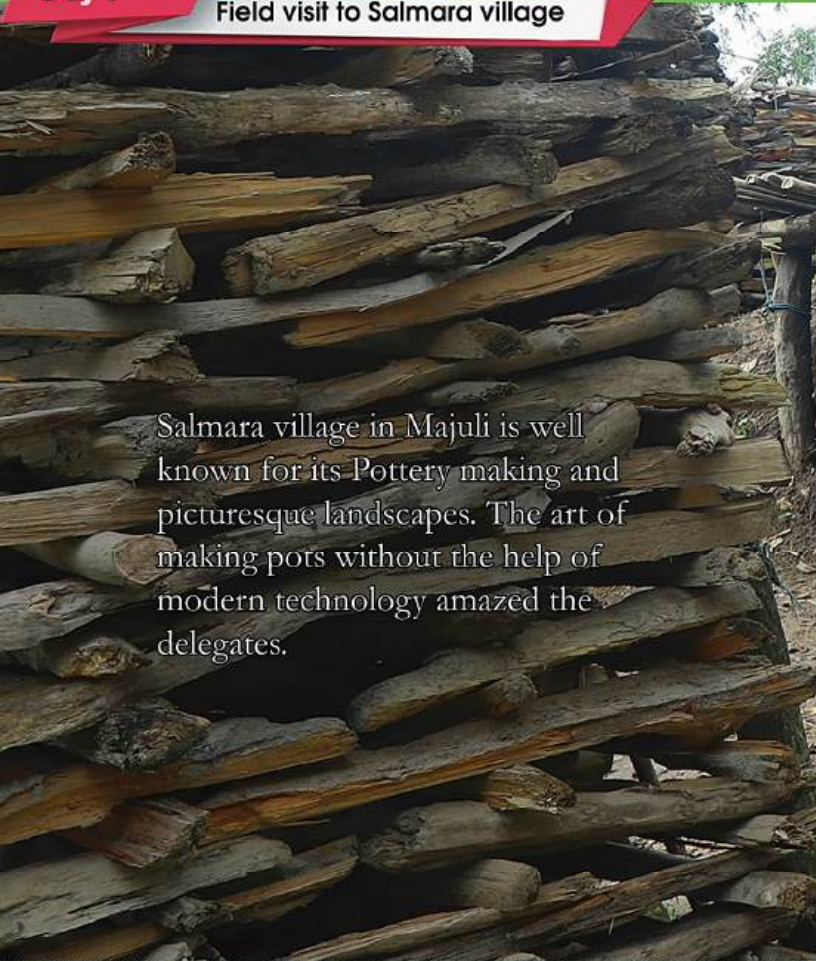


This particular Satra belongs to the Brahma-samhara section founded by Damodardev. The main deity of this Satra is popularly known as 'JadavaRai'. This is one of the 'Chari Raaj Satra'. Dakhinpat Satra is well known for its annual Raas festival. Visitors witnessed the 'Akhaye Bonti' which has been lit over a period of 368 years.





Salmara village in Majuli is well known for its Pottery making and picturesque landscapes. The art of making pots without the help of modern technology amazed the delegates.





The scenic beauty of the Brahmaputra and the life of the Fishermen's community was also well illustrated during the visit. The lunch for the Group - A was arranged by the villagers of Salmora village, along with performance of Gayan Bayan, a part of Sattriya dance created by Sankardeva by the Young boys of the village.



Group B :
Auniati Satra & Major Chapori

Auniati Satra is one of the major Satras of Majuli. It is believed that Ahom King Jayadhwaj Singha established this Satra.



LAKHUTA (WOODEN PILLAR)
(1745-1750 Saka year)
DURING THE RULE OF AHOM KING CHANDRASENKA BROTHER THE 10TH SATRAHARAH SAH IN ROSSIGARH BY IN AUNIATI SATRA BECAME UNSTEADY IN BUILDING THE SATRA DUE TO FLOODING WOODS COULD NOT BE FOUND IN THE NEARBY THE SATRAHARAH HAS BEEN THE GROUP SHOWN BY A BOOK, ACCORDINGLY SATRAHARAH AND HIS DEVOTES COLLECTED A WOODEN PILLAR FROM THE SOUTH BANARHATA BRANCH BROUGHT TO THE SATRA AND INSTALLED AS A PRINCIPAL PILLAR (LAKHUTA) OF SATRA.



The main deity placed in the Manikut of the Namghar is '**Gobinda**'. The Satra also houses a museum containing precious historical resources. A part of the masterpiece Hastibidyarnaba and a few important writings from the middle age period following the pattern of prose of that period.





Major Chapori is a Mising village located on the end part of Majuli island. The village has a beautiful view of the confluence of Brahmaputra and Subansiri rivers.





The village is very prone to floods and soil erosion. The villagers enlighten the delegates on their daily struggles along with the resilience that they live.





for the Group - B LUNCH
was arranged by the
villagers of Major Chapori



Mr. Gandhi Darang from Arunachal Pradesh shared about his experience stating that the visit to Major Chapori village was interesting as well as saddening at the same time. During the visit, he witnessed massive erosions on both sides of the river banks. He stated, “The problem needs holistic intervention from the government and civil society”. It was found that the villagers had shifted multiple times from their actual location because of the flash flood. The condition of the people was very pathetic and the lone drinking water project that was situated in the village was not functioning well. The villagers mainly rely on agriculture for their livelihood but the problem there was the cultivable lands were inundated during summer. So, he posits on encouraging more winter crops to be harvested at a large scale for commercial purposes. The people were also experts in handloom and handicraft items making, and their culture was very intact. So, tourism & handicrafts must be another livelihood option for the villagers.







Inagural Session of NEIWT and Natghar Majuli International Theater Festival

Followed by the field visit, the inaugural session for North East India Water Talk 2.0 & Naatghar Majuli International Theatre festival 2023 was scheduled at 5:00 - 6:00 pm at Srimanta Sankardev Kristi Sangha, Garmur. The conclave was inaugurated with the presence and lightening of the lamp by distinguished guests; Satradhikar, Sri Sri Uttar Kamalabari Satra, Satradhikar, Sri Sri Garmur Satra, Mr. Buban Gam, (MLA, Majuli), Mr. Paramananda Chayaengiya (Chief of Mising Autonomous Council), EC's and GMs of MAC and Senior representatives from all the Eight states of North-East India.





Neelam Das and Biswajit Changmai initiated the inaugural sessions along with the members of NEIWT & Naatghar Majuli. After the lighting of the lamp, the function was graced with the performance of Gayan Bayan, a part of Sattriya dance shaped by Baishnab Saint Srimanta Sankardeva. The inaugural session was graced with the presence of more than 600 representatives from both the delegates of North-East India Water Talk 2.0, as well as peoples from Majuli.





The inaugural drama titled "**Chordhora**," penned by Guru Madhadeva and directed by Gaurav Kumar Dutta was performed. After the first drama, the Dengrali Creator's Hub, Guwahati, performed the play 'Bhumikanya' directed by Manimala Das.





The second day of the conclave was graced with the keynote address from Mr. K. K. Chatradhara by remembering the day of 'International Day of Non-Violence.' He also gave a background and the years of journey on the initiatives of NEIWT to the delegates.





The keynote address was followed by a presentation on the situation of water in the Northeast by **Dr. Partha J. Das**, a renowned hydrologist and climatologist. Dr. Das presented the current water scenario and its significance in the Northeast region and the importance of providing space for young people to research this issue. He explained how they began to consider the issues of water and further discussed the prevailing issues on water and the emerging issues. He pointed out that there is a big gap in information about groundwater, aquifer mappings at district/sub district levels, wetland censuses, and river degradation. He talked about trans boundary water issues and the Integrated Basin Development Strategy 2016 and National Water Policy 2022. He commended the Meghalaya Basin Development Authority and mentioned that Assam is unable to formulate its water policy so far. He narrated about the integration of community involvement in water management in the northeast region. Further, he explained about how the people are worried that the rivers like the Gomti River in Tripura and the Imphal River in Manipur are becoming dry. He also touched the burning issues like climate change and water, decreasing monsoon rainfall in the northeast region, extreme weather events, and importance of floods in Kaziranga National Park, how the 5 million people's livelihoods that depend on the Brahmaputra and other water bodies, conservation of our water resources, management of rivers that flow from Bhutan and China (across the border) and urban water problems. Dr. Das concluded his presentation with an appeal for taking care of the environment and getting involved in local water issues.



Dr. Das' presentation was followed by parallel sessions for two hours titled TRIBUTARY TALK on different thematic areas. In between there was a tea break.



Theme : Local Water Problems

The TT-1, themed, “Local Water Problems” was aimed to discuss the issues related to: People’s daily struggle for securing water for domestic purposes; water pollution and contamination; Urban and rural water crisis; Water scarcity in hills and valleys with an objective to understanding the diverse water related problems across the length and breadth of Northeast India, was coordinated by Ms. Mayalmit Lepcha of Sikkim, moderated by Mr. Mrinal Gohain and reported by Tez Kingkar Borah of Assam.



Tributary Talk - 1
Local Water Problems



Dr. Tomi Ete, the inaugural discussant of the talk, explained the water scenario of Arunachal Pradesh, focusing on the river basins, catchment areas, and watersheds of the state. In his detailed presentation he provided data on forest cover, rainfall pattern, extreme precipitation events, siltation in foothills due to phenomena like erosion and landslides in hills and topsoil depletion in Arunachal Pradesh. He also highlighted the ecological conservation in Basar, the development of artificial water bodies in Ziro and the Arunachal government's small hydropower policy.



Theme : Local Water Problems

Rabindranath talked about the idea of 'forced acceleration', which is the main reason why people lose their jobs. He discussed the effects of debris on soil deterioration, the effects of mining in mountainous areas and floodplains, the effects of erosion on people's lives and livelihoods and the idea of fostering alternative thinking at the local level to uncover anthropogenic causes.





Theme : Local Water Problems



Arupjyoti Das, the third speaker, focuses on the water situation in Guwahati, which encompasses issues such as waterlogging, groundwater depletion, unplanned concretisation, encroachment of water bodies, degradation of rivers such as Bharalu, Bahini, and Baisistha, and focuses on comprehending our relationship with water at the local level.



Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman addressed the topic of collective riparian responsibility, northeast solidarity in water, river regionalism, and transboundary water systems in the Northeast region. He also spoke about the consequences of both upstream and downstream, as well as the larger bioregion that includes Bhutan, Nepal, Tibet, Myanmar, and Bangladesh.



Theme : Local Water Problems

Mayalmit Lepcha provided an overview of the communities' relationship with water in various dimensions, including their daily routines, rainfall patterns in Sikkim and emphasis on safeguarding the Rengeet and Teesta rivers. She also said that students should be exposed to intense field work to get them interested in water.



Azing Partin spoke about local struggles related to water in Arunachal Pradesh. He discussed the Memorandum of Agreements (MoA) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Government of India and the Government of Arunachal Pradesh and the subsequent resistance put up by the locals. He also pointed out the errors in the 'Forest Conservation Amendment Act' of 2023.

Theme :
 Local Water Problems


Gunrei Kamei, the fifth speaker, emphasised the use of chemicals in breaking down rocks, which leads to the contamination of rivers. He also talked about how the Barak River was polluted by railroad construction. He discussed the water scarcity in the Tamenglong area and the consequences of water contamination for aquatic creatures. He also talked about how important brooks and small streams are for saving water.



The discussion concluded with the topics pertaining to early warning systems, weather forecasting, and the funding of projects by the World Bank, IMF and ADB.

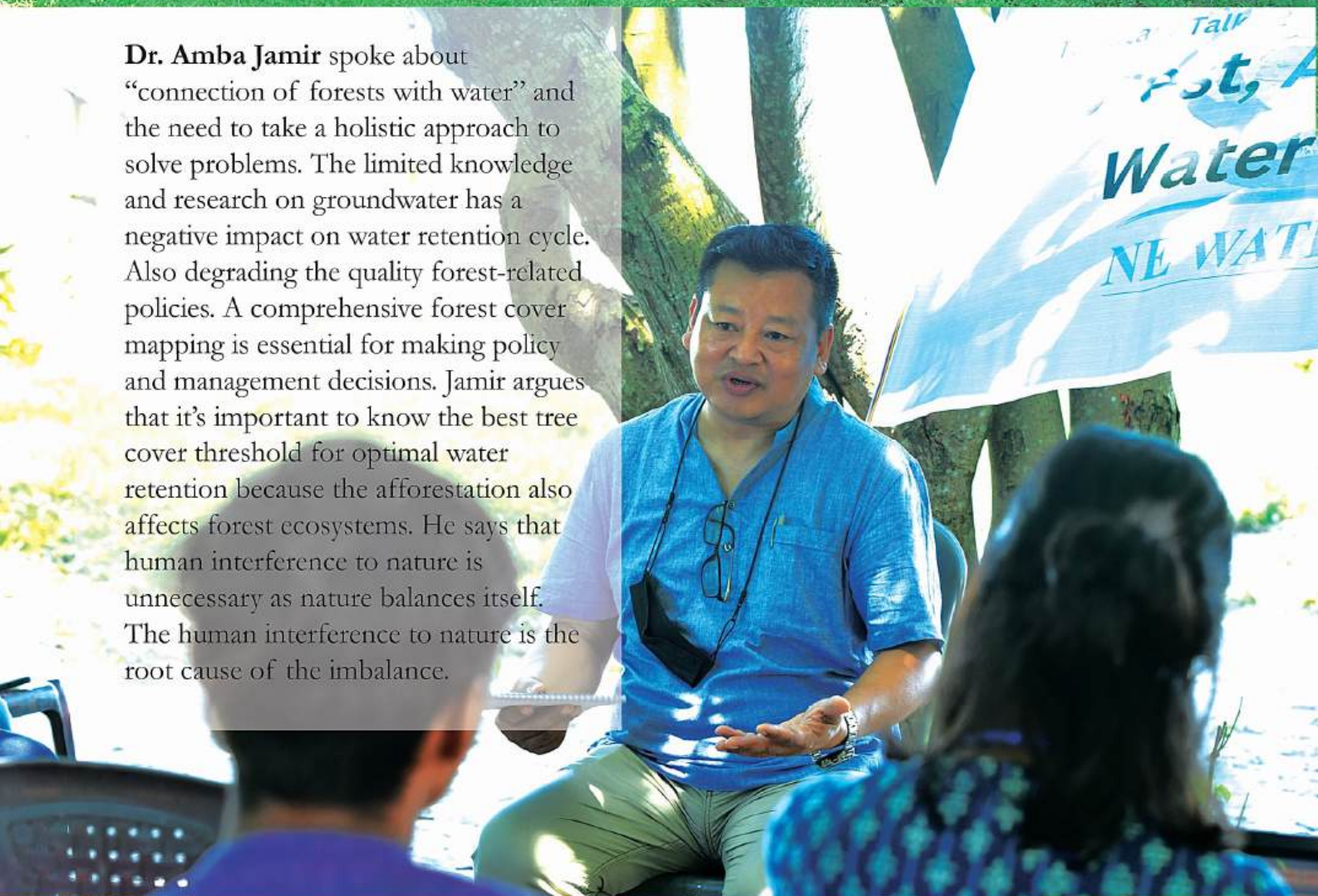


The TT-2, themed “Forest, Aquatic Life & Water Linkages” was aimed at discussing issues related to: Water scarcity, lack of access to potable water and other associated issues due to ecological degradation of watersheds/catchment of rivers; deforestation and destruction of upland catchment forest; Impact on rivers, wetlands and aquatic life, the forest-hydrology links, with the Objective: Exploring the interdependence of forests and water systems. TT-2 was co-ordinated by **Donald Takhell**, moderated by Mamta Lukram; both from Manipur and reported by Antara Das from Assam. The lead discussants of the talks are **Dr. Amba Jamir**, Dawa Lendup Lepcha, Dr Rapa Sangno and Synem Hrangkhawl.



Theme :
Forest, Aquatic Life & Water Linkages

Dr. Amba Jamir spoke about “connection of forests with water” and the need to take a holistic approach to solve problems. The limited knowledge and research on groundwater has a negative impact on water retention cycle. Also degrading the quality forest-related policies. A comprehensive forest cover mapping is essential for making policy and management decisions. Jamir argues that it’s important to know the best tree cover threshold for optimal water retention because the afforestation also affects forest ecosystems. He says that human interference to nature is unnecessary as nature balances itself. The human interference to nature is the root cause of the imbalance.



Theme : Forest, Aquatic Life & Water Linkages

Dawa Lendup Lepcha from North Sikkim's Dzongu valley talked about the importance of forests, mountains, and rivers to their beliefs and day to day life. He raises serious concerns on the current trends of development induced impacts. Claims that indigenous perspective has been consistently ignored in the time of conceptual phases of projects.



Dr. Rapa Sangno, from Arunachal Pradesh, addressed the issues related to Kameng river, highlighting the increasing water contamination caused by district government waste disposals. He explained how he started caring about rivers; which was mainly due to the empty plastic bottles found in the river when he used to go fishing. Taking matters into his own hands, later he started an organisation to generate awareness among the people. The organisation has been advocating for plastic reuse models, to engage unemployed youth. Sangno concluded by stating that “the threat of pollution to one river is a threat to all rivers”.

A participant asked Dr. Sangno about the possibilities of a plastic-free economy. No, said Sangno. Amba Jamir stated that the ultimate accountability for responsible plastic usage lies with individuals, given their potential to exert influence over the marketplace.



Synem Hrangkhawl explained the issues of forest and water in Tripura, a state where only 30% of the indigenous tribal populations live in the hills and forests, while others live in plains. The tribal customary laws aim to safeguard natural environments, stifle waste and preserving forest cover. She added that Jhum agriculture is not responsible for deforestation because they only cut smaller trees.

A participant from Manipur said that it's important to see science and scientific knowledge as people's experiences, instead of technical aspects. The Meghalayan participant stated that up to fifteen rivers in the region had been contaminated, raised questions about the legitimacy of government-sponsored research, also mentioned the lack of action by the Ministry and forest authorities, and highlighted the use of threats and bribery to suppress criticism.

Mamta Lukram talked about how rich people are rewarded for taking advantage of others to make things better, but indigenous people are not treated well because wealthy people think tribal people are not smart enough.





The TT-3 was themed “Indigenous perspectives of water (knowledge & management)” and it discussed the issues related to: History, traditional institutions and community’s water management practices, issues and concerns with an objective to understanding the perspectives of indigenous communities on water and water management and was coordinated by **Dr. Monuj Dutta** from Assam, moderated by **Prof. Sukhendu Debbarma** from Tripura and reported by **Mr. Ajay Doley** from Assam.

At the start of the discussion **Mr. Sanat Chakraborty**, pointed out that whenever we talk about traditional wisdom or indigenous perspectives, we should always consider the perspective of the people who live there. One should try to go beyond what they’ve learned in school and college; this is a kind of knowledge that we created. But there are other kinds of knowledge that exist outside or along with the institutional knowledge, which is called ancestral or indigenous knowledge. These kinds of knowledge are often ignored. Much of indigenous knowledge is expressed through folklore and folktales or myths and also manifest in socio cultural belief systems and practices. But in the name of modernity, we are undermining the importance of some of the traditional values, knowledge and wisdom which need to be documented and studied.

Theme :

Indigenous perspectives of water (knowledge & management)





The second speaker, **Girin Chetia**, addressed the issue of water availability and expressed his concern for the indigenous people. “Assamese people consider water to be God’s gift and worship it as a deity. We should respect the law of land and nature in order to secure our water”, he said. The water should not be used as a weapon for war by any state or nation.

Mr. Pema Lody Lepcha, spoke about the Lepcha’s spiritual beliefs of water. He stated Lepchas belief that water, rivers, and mountains are their identity. They believe that nature, rivers, and mountains are sacred. Lepcha owes a duty to safeguard their river and mountains.

Mr. Bele Asheibam, stated at the importance of the SDGs in his speech. He says that they have community ponds and these ponds are the only source of water. According to him, the “National water plan” in the Netherlands attracted him, and that “our” states should be implementing a similar plan. He highlighted the importance in reviving the community ponds which are disappearing rapidly. He also talked on organic farming, conservation of traditional knowledge and preservation of water sources.





Theme :

Indigenous perspectives of water (knowledge & management)

Dr. Uttam Bathari said there is nothing new to say about how the indigenous people know about water. Water is always sacred to Indigenous societies. The indigenous communities worship water and valleys, which some people think are superstitions. The conventional institutional learning is based on the belief that the traditional wisdom is something mystical and unscientific. On the other hand, this knowledge isn't passed on to the next generation. The sacred rivers and lands are disappearing, laws should have a legal system to protect them.

Dr. John Thomas believes that rivers, mountains, and plants can speak to us if we are willing to listen. He advised that wastage of water should be kept in mind as human beings are not only who consume water. The indigenous communities are the sole guardians of forests, hills, rivers, and water. Therefore, when making policies, it is important to include local people.

According to **Prof. Nitul Kr. Gogoi** from Dibrugarh University, water is the source of life, and therefore, it is important to pray for water. Water has the capacity to save lives and also kill them. He believes that the NEP will not give importance to the traditional knowledge and Indigenous practice in the new curriculum. Because of this, the traditional knowledge and practices of the indigenous communities will not be transferred to the younger generation. Traditional knowledge is the only way to survive, so we should continue to use it.



Indigenous perspectives of water (knowledge & management)

Some of the participants in the talk pointed out that :

- Water and rivers are alive, so we don't think of them as dead because only living things can give life;
- Water is also a medicine;
- Sustainability and religious sanctity should be considered when discussing preservation of water;
- The river is considered the saviour of the village and it also brings people together. The identity of the community stems from the river, as the names of the villages and places are derived from the names of the rivers and hills;
- It is essential to transform traditional knowledge into viable technological knowledge.

Everyone was of the view that traditional knowledge can only protect water and water bodies for the days to come. The talk ended with a vote of thanks by the coordinator, Dr. Monuj Dutta of Dibrugarh University, who thanked all the participants and speakers.





Theme :

Climate Change and Water; Emerging challenges for the NE region

The TT-4, themed **“Climate Change and Water; Emerging challenges for the NE region”**, discussed: Experiencing and responding to the impact on water quantity, quality, flow availability, livelihoods, and management mitigation and adaptation, with an objective to develop a network of people and organisations for local climate monitoring and resilience building. The Talk was coordinated by Ram Wangkheirakpam, moderated by Dr. Deben Sharma and Moirangthem Surchand reported it; all three hail from Manipur.

The discussion began with Dr. Partha Das, with a briefing about how global warming has led to changes in the environmental conditions since the invasion of the European Industrial Revolution (the mid-1850s). He said that this process led to a rise in temperature, which later became a major factor in the changes caused by climate. From an atmospheric point of view, it affected all kinds of life forms and led to a rise in natural hazardous substances. Countries in the third world, such as India, are particularly vulnerable to climate change, which will eventually result in massive emigration. The North Eastern region of India faces a significant fluctuation in rainfall and temperature, which is the main driver of climate change. The link between climatic and non-climatic factors has been shown to be strong. Due to the global process, the actual greater cause lies somewhere. The alteration in the frequency of rainfall had a significant impact, leading to more flash floods, the dilution of wetlands, seasonal dryness, water scarcity, etc.





Theme :

Climate Change and Water; Emerging challenges for the NE region

The lack of data on rivers, wetlands, and groundwater is a major obstacle in research. There is no aquifer mapping at the district or sub-district levels. The wetlands census was insufficient, and the wetlands rules of 2017 were not implemented properly. There is no adequate information on the degradation of rivers, pollution, and their fragmentation.

Important point that came out from the discussions are:

- there is no policy on water that is progressive. There is a good beginning in Meghalaya;
- there is no acknowledgement of traditional/local knowledge or management, which are very strong. Water Stories can do this well. Local-Based knowledge documentation is key. We need to begin to document water stories on Climate Change;
- the government is not sincere about community involvement and participation;
- till date, there have been no climate sensitive policies in all states;
- it's worrying that the springs are running out of water. The village lacks water supply.
- rivers and wetlands are drying up;
- that there is a lack of adequate data on the impacts of climate change.

Chenithung Humtsoe focuses on water scarcity issues in Nagaland during winter. He said we need to talk to people who live in the area who are dealing with serious problems.

Rehana Rehman of Assam said, "The whole thing is a process which does not confine and can't be narrowed down to one. Human activities and interventions require monitoring, with focusing on the cause rather than the effect."

Y Dedeepya Reddy highlighted the issues and concerns associated with the advancing fast fashion industry and its impact on environmental concerns.

TT-4 ended with an understanding of Nature-based Science; science which "doesn't break the laws of nature". Science and technology are getting better, but we will use nature-based solutions instead of big engineering projects. We will focus on local solutions that use local and indigenous methods.



Theme :

Water Governance

TT- 5 was themed “**Water Governance**” and it discussed Laws, policies and Institutions, control, and management of water with the objective of building a sustainable and inclusive water management system. Coordinated by Thomas Malsom, moderated by Mr. Anthony Debbarma; both from Tripura and reported by Lakum Chang from Nagaland.

Mr. Anthony Debbarma opened up the discussion highlighting the availability of water networks which are accessible in most states but are lacking in some places even for basic needs. He said that water is vital for the entire ecosystem, its growing importance due to climate change. He also mentioned carbon emissions and pollution resulting from consumerism and overuse in developed countries. He briefly discussed the Green Climate Fund and the responsibility of individuals.

Mr. Ajay Kumar Das explained that despite sufficient water availability, people often have to buy water due to system and governance failures. He touched on Gandhi's influence on laws and discussed the concentration of power within the state hierarchy. He provided an overview of water laws in India, and various related articles. He also noted shortcomings in resolving water disputes and policy implementation.





Theme :

Water Governance

Mr. Sunil Mow discussed issues pertaining to clean water, effect of pollution and the challenges faced by rivers, like the Yamuna in Arunachal Pradesh. He expressed the need for legal and advocacy approaches, emphasised the absence of specific water laws, and recommended their proper framing and implementation.

Ms. Tosang Chang briefly talked about water governance in Nagaland, including local conflicts related to accessibility of water.

Ms. Romita Reang addressed water issues in rural Tripura, the political influence, unequal management and the need for sensitization and increased participation.

Mr. Chumei Langkang shared the story of Shiroi lily in Manipur, highlighting deforestation's impact on water scarcity and increased pollution due to mining.

Ms. Empee Renthlei from Mizoram mentioned water and forest-related issues, particularly the Tlawng River and the Save Tlawng project which is aimed at preventing exploitation and deforestation.

Mr. Nokito raised concerns about water accessibility in mountainous villages, which leads to water scarcity.

The talk concluded with a consensus that policy makers need to be sensitised, but the responsibility starts with individuals, emphasising both fundamental rights and duties.





Theme :

Water Governance

Points captured from TT5:

1. **Regional disparities in water accessibility:** Inequality in water accessibility across states underscores the need for fair distribution.
2. **Water and Ecosystems:** Water is very important for living things and ecosystems. Climate change is making it even more important.
3. **The environmental consequences of consumerism:** Consumption in developed countries contributes to pollution and carbon emissions, which in turn worsen global water challenges.
4. **The Global Climate Fund:** The availability of this fund primarily favours large organisations. Government accountability and individual responsibility are required.
5. **Legal reforms are required:** Despite adequate water availability, governance failures force people to purchase water. Legal reform is important for equal access.
6. **Challenges with the Power Hierarchy:** Governance hierarchies make managing water difficult, so it's important to know Indian water laws.
7. **Preservation of wetlands:** Wetlands need to be protected by legal mechanisms and policies.
8. **Water Disputes are resolved:** Current dispute resolution mechanisms are not effective, so stronger governance is needed.
9. **The protection of rivers:** Pollution is causing problems with important rivers, which requires taking legal action, getting experts involved, and working with non-profit groups.
10. **The challenges of Arunachal Pradesh:** The pollution occurring in Arunachal Pradesh as a result of mining and deforestation necessitates advocacy and legal resolutions.
11. **Water Governance in Nagaland:** Conflicts over water ownership and privatization concerns continue in Nagaland.
12. **Problems in rural Tripura:** Political power struggles affect how people manage water in rural Tripura. People need to be educated and involved.
13. **The Water Crisis in Manipur:** Deforestation and mining have caused water shortages in Manipur, making it important to protect forests.
14. **Conservation of the water and forest in Mizoram:** Mizoram showcases river conservation initiatives like Save Tlawng to prevent exploitation.
15. **Mountain village water accessibility:** Mountain villages need innovative solutions to problems with scarcity of water

The tributary talks ended with Lunch break and all participants from the 5 TT's merged to attend the confluence talks.



Theme : Women and Water

Issues : Gender inequality, impact on women health and nutrition, gender justice, breaking barriers and advancing gender equality in water management.

Objective : Empowering Women: Navigating Fluid Opportunities in Water Conservation.

Facilitated by Hema Das and Ranjita Bania; both from Assam and reported by **Tosangla Chang.**

Conversation initiators from respective states : Jarjum Ete (Arunachal Pradesh), Jolly Saikia (Assam), Mamta Lukram (Manipur), Lalmanpuii Renthlei (Mizoram), Swedevino Natso (Nagaland), Romita Reang (Tripura), Mayalmit Lepcha (Sikkim).





Theme : Women and Water

In order to empower women in water conservation, the objective of the session was to break barriers and step-up gender equality in water management. Some common strategies that come out from the talk were :

1. Promote Women's Participation: Ensure women's participation and representation in decision-making processes related to water management. This can be done by creating platforms for women to voice their ideas and concerns, and by providing training and capacity-building opportunities for women in the water sector.

2. Improve Access to Water Resources: Ensure that women have equal access to clean and safe water for domestic and agricultural purposes. This can be achieved by implementing gender-sensitive water management policies and infrastructure projects that take into account the specific needs and roles of women.





Theme : Women and Water

3. Enhance Women's Skills and Knowledge: Provide women with training and education on water management techniques, conservation practices, and climate change adaptation strategies. This will enable women to actively participate in water conservation efforts and take up leadership roles in the water sector.

4. Promote Gender-Responsive Water Policies: Advocate for the development and implementation of gender-responsive water policies and strategies. This includes recognizing and addressing the specific challenges faced by women in accessing and managing water resources, and mainstreaming gender considerations in all aspects of water management and governance.





Theme : Women and Water

5. Raise Awareness and Change Attitudes: Conduct awareness campaigns and educational programs to challenge gender stereotypes and promote the value of gender equality in water management. This will help change societal attitudes towards women's roles and capabilities in the water sector.





Theme : Women and Water



By adopting these strategies, the women group concluded that we can break barriers, empower women, and create a more inclusive and sustainable approach to water conservation and management



Theme : Way Forward - I

Water and Life; what we can do for our future?

Issue: Given the current water situation what should be the way forward.

Objective: To highlight “specific issues with action plan”.

Facilitated by Mr. K. K. Chatradhara.

Some quote from the speakers’ thoughts from the talk as bellow:



Prof. Sukhendu Debbarma, “I could not join the first water talk. It is not only the water we have been working with. There are different aspects, particularly of indigenous people, that I have worked with for the last 25-30 years. I’m trying to understand the problems faced by different communities at the local level. I find that the groups that aren’t included in the mainstream have been the most affected. I am calling them, the voice of the voiceless. Their voices are not heard. What I perceive through this water talk is that we need to do more because this is an issue that will affect us more directly than anything else. When we talk about development, we only think about the other side, but the impact is often forgotten. We just talked about palm oil farming in Tripura. Many people don’t know how palm oil affects the water. The people in the area have been living without using palm oil. Now, what is the need? People don’t care because the government is funding the schemes. We have to go to the community to make them aware of the impact they have. I observe a significant number of young students present at our gathering. It is my belief that you will one day serve as a leader in the community. Getting aware of issues and clearing up any doubts is the first thing to do. This is one of the ways in which we can move forward. If we don’t do that, we won’t be able to help the community. I believe we should share more of our experiences. If we share, we become stronger. We want to create a group of people who can share their knowledge.”



Theme : Way Forward -I

Mr. Chenithung Humtsoe, “In the water talk at Kohima, there was some curiosity about palm oil cultivation in Nagaland. I had the opportunity to speak with some top officials from Nagaland about palm oil cultivation. Most of the time, we were talking about employment, but not about sustainability aspects of the local people or biodiversity. We already have a problem with rubber plant cultivation in the state. This type of plantation is causing water scarcity in the state. The village leaders are innocent. It is a task to connect grassroots-level people to the apex bodies. In Nagaland, only 20% of the JJM (Jal Jeevan Mission) succeeds. We must inform policymakers and grassroots people why this scheme is not benefiting anyone. This is how we should work together and stay focused. We would like to express our desire to host the water talk in Doiyang in the future.”

Dr. Uttam Bathari, “During COVID time, there were online water talk series, and I attended some of them. We need to keep doing that. We think that everything around us is abundantly available. But water is the most crucial thing. Freshwater is too scarce, only one per cent in proportion or something. We should be even more frugal with our water usage. It is encouraging to see that so many young people are participating here. To sensitize the younger people is one way forward”.





Theme : Way Forward -I

Mr. Bele Aseibam, “What will we do together in the future? We should not wait for water talk three. We need to start working either at the village level, or at the institutional level, if possible at the policy level. I was doing my own part. I have seen many children dropping out of school. They have plenty of problems. They are facing water scarcity. The government has established a goal to provide access to tap water to every household. But at present, no household in my village has access to tap water, though there is a treatment plant. We buy water at the cost of Rs 500/600 per thousand litres. During the rainy season, we can access it at around Rs 300. That translates to Rs 5 to 6 crore when you consider it for a village with a population of around 15000 per year. I want to introduce a rural water filtration and distribution system. It is in the conceptual stage and lacks funding. I will involve the college-going students in the distribution system. If we install at least 20 treatment systems, there will be around 500 students involved with an honorarium of Rs 1000. They will distribute drinking water to every household. I am talking to some potential funders, and if it happens, there will be another story for water talk-3”.

Mrs. Sadia Sohail, “I had an opportunity to be present in the first talk in Guwahati. I have seen the conceptual stage and how it has expanded its network and outreach. After four years, it is really a very good movement. In the process of water talk, it is nice to see the idea germinating and flourishing. It is very very gratifying to see all the people coming from the North East and talking passionately about the issues related to water and climate change and all the interlinkages to amplify the advocacy around water”.





Drama & Documentary

In the evening the participants attended either the Documentary film screening or the Theatre festival.

Name of the documentary

(Venue: Ayang Okum Cottage, Garmur)

- **Phum Shang (2014):** Also known as Floating Life by Haobam Paban Kumar. A 52 minutes documentary film is a classic case of the impact of mega development in Manipur, across India and elsewhere. The story provides a case in point of how mega projects have displaced thousands and uprooted them from their livelihood, identity and dignity.

- **Blue Gold (2023):** Blue Gold a 7 minutes documentary follows the story of a water harvest pond constructed under the FOCUS - IFAD project in Mokokchung village. The success story highlights how the water harvesting pond benefits the farmers and helps in water conservation; and also, how it connects different types of farms and brings the community together. Water harvest ponds are an integral part of sustainable farming practice.

Name of Theatre

(Venue : Srimanata Sankardev Kristi Sangha)

- **Chandit Gadyat Epiyola Madya Othoba Ati Padya Othoba Noibedyo** written by Hemanta Borpatra Gohain and directed by Pabitra Chetia. The play was performed by one of the renowned groups of Assam, Pathar, Duliajan.

- **Untouched** directed by Sujeewa Pathinisekara. An Inter Act Art performed by a Sri Lankan Theatre group. It is a performance of Subodhi Lakmani, a famous Sri Lankan actress.

- **Erendira's Metamorphosis** directed and written by well-known Theatre personality of Assam, Dr. Mrinal Jyoti Goswami and the acting and creation of Namrata Sharma made the play more pleasant.

Day two ended with the dinner for all the delegates at Ayang Okum cottage, Garmur.





State Water Talks

Post breakfast, the day three of the talk started with the State wise discussion for around 50 minutes and then all states came back together and shared their summary of discussion in the larger group. State wise representative: Joe Lamare (Meghalaya), Titha Prasad Saikia (Assam), Azing Partin (Arunachal Pradesh), Donald Takhell (Manipur), Thomas Malsom (Tripura), Dawa Lepcha (Sikkim), Tosang Chang (Nagaland), Dohama (Mizoram). The key points of the state's presentations are as follows:

Nagaland : The notion of water is a relatively new concept to Nagas. Nagaland needs to write down stories and work together to save water, use rainwater for farming, and make water bodies better. Nagaland has realised the importance of talking and finding more and more like-minded people.



Sikkim : Sikkim's indigenous people are closely connected to water. We have sadly lost the beauty of nature in the name of development. Sikkim is looking for support from all corners in order to save the state's ecology.





State Water Talks

Assam : One of the biggest problems in Assam is flooding. Assam faces both macro and micro-level challenges, including a decrease in groundwater levels, contamination of drinking water, and the commodification of water. Many issues are no longer specific to one area. People of Assam are yet to understand the problems posed by the embankments and release of water in peak hour.



Arunachal Pradesh : The Arunachal have very limited agrarian land. The contagious problem of Arunachal is mega dams, Dibang, Subansiri and Kameng projects should be watched carefully and notice its impact. The Arunachal Pradesh Protection of Drinking Water Catchment Areas Act, 2023 is a good act. Pesticides and weedicides should also be prevented by strong acts and rules. Solid waste is made in the hills and thrown into small rivers. This is a huge problem that must be addressed by community organisations and municipalities. The tourism industry should have sustainable waste management in place.





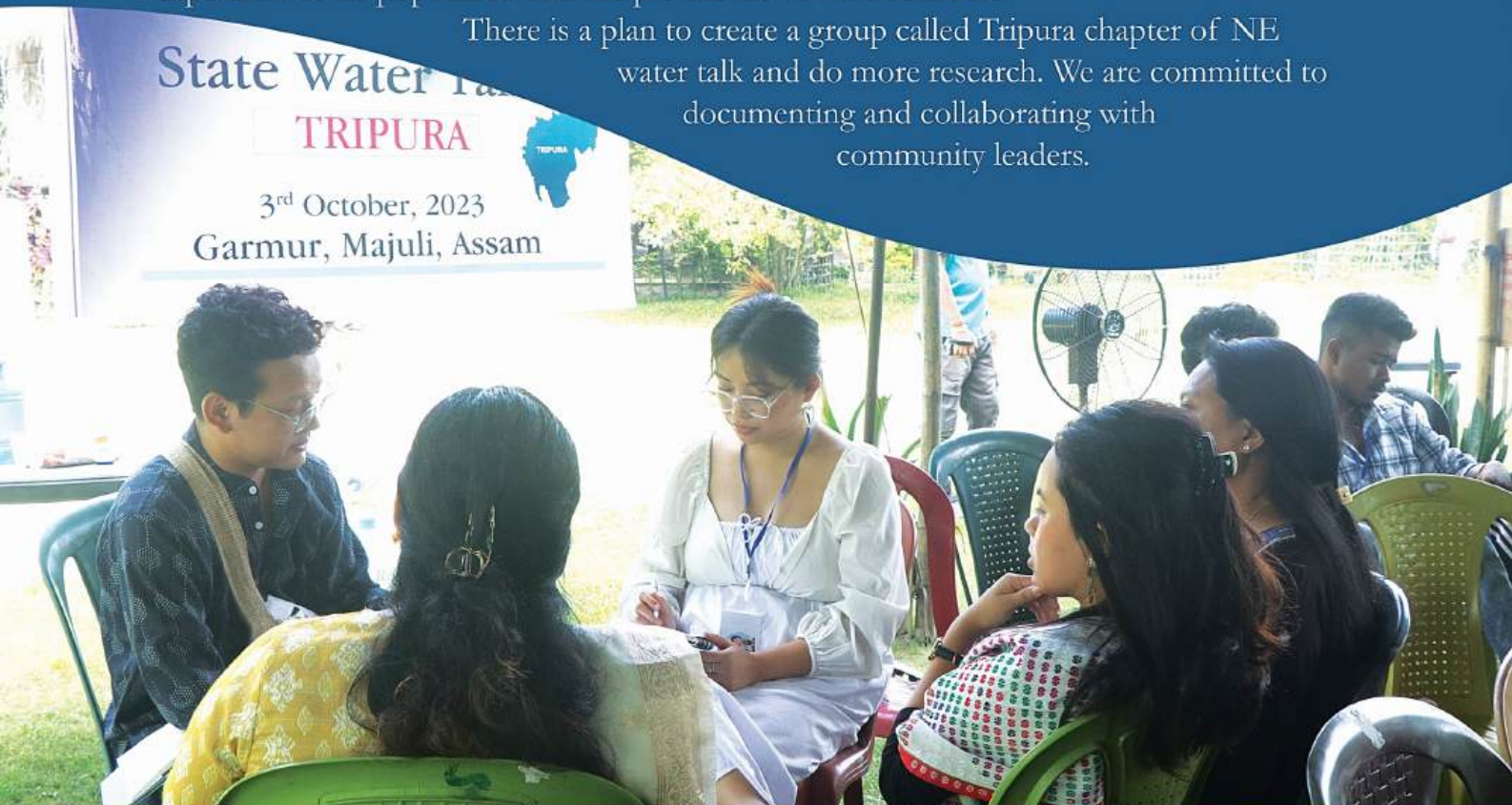
State Water Talks

Manipur : Agriculture; the main economic sector in Manipur remains to be rain-fed. There are increasing cases of complete crop failure in Manipur. People are increasingly buying water for household consumption. The hills of Manipur are buying water at an exorbitant rate as compared to the prices in the valley. A specific survey is needed to determine the cost of water. Moreover, the increasing trend of monocultures plantation in the state has a direct bearing to the water crisis and hence a need to check monocultures are felt.



Tripura : The name of the state Tripura originates from Tui, which means water, and Pra, which means nearby. But there is a water crisis in Tripura right now. Rural areas of Tripura depend mostly on rain water. At the same time, deforestation and monoculture activities like rubber plantation are causing heat waves in Tripura. ONGC is currently exploring the hill areas for natural gas. Tripura faces significant challenges due to the expansion of its population and the prevalence of monocultures.

There is a plan to create a group called Tripura chapter of NE water talk and do more research. We are committed to documenting and collaborating with community leaders.





State Water Talks

Mizoram: Mizoram has multiple traditional bodies that protect natural resources, but the government of India and Mizoram have some shortcomings regarding roads and other developmental projects. The waste management in Mizoram is a failure. Palm oil cultivation is putting pressure on the water supply in Mizoram.



Meghalaya: Meghalaya is a land of clouds and we have a lot of water. We must properly conserve these resources. The traditional institutions are responsible for safeguarding forest resources. The district councils are responsible for regulating timber trade. The illegal trade is destroying the rich natural resources of Meghalaya. River sources are drying up. Limestone mining is a source of pollution in the west Jaintia Hills. We are planning to address this issue with the Ministry of Forest and Climate Change.





State Water Talks

The open space has given some additional input outside of the states sharing.

- We should have a Regional Green Tribunal bench here in the North East, and that should be the next topic of the water talk.
- Youths must try to talk up. Online platforms can be used even if it's not possible to meet physically.
- Water talks can be initiated at the institution level. Water issues may be taken up by colleges and universities.
- The community should be involved in the process because they are the ones who provide the primary data.

Mr. Paramananda Chayengiya, the CEM of Mising Autonomous Council shared a documentary on indigenous knowledge to prevent erosion to the delegates. Chayengia said, "We are very worried about flood and erosion in the entire north and south bank of Assam. We talk about porcupines and boulders that can be used as spars. But instead of Geobags and other technologies, could we consider traditional things? I had the opportunity to drive through a village called Pathorichuk and saw a fantastic scene. They put down the saplings of a certain tree at the bank. The tree grows quickly and acts like a porcupine. But this can also cause a problem and could block the natural flow of the river. But most importantly, can we use this tree to solve the problem?"



Dr. Partha Jyoti Das commented that locally found solutions could be tried and replicated in other areas. But that must be done in small rivers and not in large rivers. Dikrong also conducted a similar experiment. They successfully stopped erosion for a stretch of two kilometers by planting native vegetation, such as Sthala Padma and Pani Kolmou. Indian Institute of Technology Gauhati helped them. A place called Lalitimukh has an interesting structure. On a small stretch, they have successfully stopped erosion."



Theme : Youth and Water

Moderated by Arup Jyoti Das

Donald Takhell (Manipur): “There has to be a dialogue between the older and young generations that’s how youths participate, rethink and reimagine water issues. A couple of months back we had a youth water talk in Roing and since then we have been in touch. I volunteer to lead a newsletter published by youths and urge my fellow friends to volunteer and take actions and participate in the ways they can. Some stories can be about crises, positive outcomes, resilience and global water scenarios. This newsletter will be on a rotational basis. In general, the challenge is that youths are not really interested about social issues and even if they’re interested it is difficult for the youths to navigate and hence the NEIWT platform can act as a bridge to streamline the Youths for a better future.”





Theme : Youth and Water

Manas Jyoti Chutia (Assam): “Problems in water are multi-dimensional. Water is the cause of man-animal conflict. Youths have stopped practising agriculture. Young people have moved to the service sector and they are migrating to outer states. The government does not have any system to track and trace them down. There are gender issues too. The rate of teenage pregnancy is high. Most of these girls are from water crisis hit areas. They move out through marriages. Youths don’t have participation in GDP and youths’ voices are not heard. They don’t participate in PRI’s”.



Theme : Youth and Water

Tosangla C Chang (Nagaland): “The first step to work for water is to educate oneself. This will lead to understanding the complexity of issues. I have witnessed the power of collective effort. We need to see that everyone has access to water. Let us start using social media for better dissemination of what we intend to do, for better mobilizations and action and to address the uncertainties.”

Lusen Chakma (Mizoram): “Development, major industries, dams and solid waste is hampering the health of water. There are some basic solutions. We need to harvest water in our community and educate them on conservation. The church and NGOs are making some awareness campaigns in Mizoram and we can join them for the outreach.”

Phura Lepcha (Sikkim): “There are reports of water contamination in Sikkim as there are no proper sewage treatment systems in Sikkim. People, although are aware about the importance of cleanliness of water, they lack the incentive to maintain water as it. Plastic bags are thrown into the water even by our team on field visit unintentionally or maybe as an act of habit. People were busy taking photo sessions instead of being mindful. We must practise what is preached; otherwise we’re also a same bunch of hypocrites.”



Theme : Way Forward -II

The Future of Water in North-East India

Objective: “Securing our liquid lifeline: Navigating the future of water management”, Moderated by Ramananda Wangkheirakpam. Key speakers: Mrinal Gohain, Dr. Deben, Jarjum Ete, Sunil Mow, Amba Jamir and Hema Das, Dr. Partha Jyoti Das, Mayalmit Lepcha.

Out of the deliberation by the speaker and from the input from the open deliberations, following points were proposed as way forward:

1) We are people from eight states. What we need is solidarity. All the time our region has been caught fighting each other. Our history has been a history of conflict. Rivers flow from mountains and go through the valleys, and that should be the basis of our unison between the hills and the valleys. We need to start writing for each other. We are all connected, our issues are one. We together need to see that our issues are taken by the policymakers and are placed in proper places. (Eight states working on a common agenda)

Goal 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation

affordable drinking water for all
defecation, access to sanitation and hygiene
water quality, wastewater treatment and reuse
water-use efficiency and
integrated water resource management
water and sanitation supply



Theme : Way Forward -II

2) This is a historical movement. Here, the more you participate the more you get the value of it. Since these last two days, we have come down to the fact that water is a human rights issue. How do we define water across cultures? Let's dig into it. Can we have a benchmark data on cost sharing for organising such talks in future? What has been the contribution of the locals and what has been the contribution of others? If 30% is the local contribution, can we look to increase more of it up until water talk 3? (Channelizing and funnelling local contribution in terms of cash, kind and services for future water talks will reduce the dependency on others)

3) Second issue is the vital human rights issues. Can we go by SDG goal number six? Is affordable water possible in places like Majuli where water is considered as a seasonal threat? (Working towards achieving goal number six is a simplified strategy on water access and management)





Theme : Way Forward -II

4) The ongoing contamination and pollution of drinking and irrigation water sources must be stopped at any cost. Some actions are being taken, but at policy level it is derogative and quite insufficient. Can we send a resolution to all the states of the North East to stop polluting water? (The forum sends a letter appealing to the government, statutory bodies and jurisprudence to drive their attention on pollution and contamination of water bodies by Agro based industries, pharmaceuticals, building and constructions, explosive industries etc.)

5) In future talks, we have to catch hold of indigenous councils, autonomous bodies etc. Involvement of community organisations is important. Without the participation, contribution and involvement of apex councils and community organisations, it will be impossible for the organisers, students' researchers and water workers to work and host future talks. (Exploration of local resources and involving tribal/indigenous bodies in water agenda)

6) Association of women's organisations is important. Explore the youth network and associate them as well.

7) We have two options, either we pollute or we save water. We should promise to save water and we need to act from day one.





Theme : Way Forward -II

8) We have some laws and regulations. Let us study the laws and see if the laws can be replicated. This can be done in two ways. One through awareness and capacity building. And the other is by legal intervention through high courts. For example, a PIL was filed in Arunachal on waste disposal successfully. Can the same be instrumental in other states?

9) Until and unless we incorporate the grassroot people, water issues won't be addressed. We have to sit with the community and make them understand why rivers are drying up.

10) Build the capacity of panchayat leaders and enhance their knowledge on water management. We could be the bridge between the community and us. We need to listen to them and write their issues down. Let us think on how we form a body at the community level that will talk about the water issues in their area?





Theme : Way Forward -II

11) Cooperation, collaboration and solidarity among the states of North east India has to be built. Let us think in terms of rivers and catchment areas. Political boundaries divide, but rivers unite. Our trans-boundary is important. We should have some instruments downstream to collaborate with the people of upstream areas. Problems like erosion will never get resolved unless we work together with Arunachal, Meghalaya and even Bhutan.

12) North East is like a white spot or grey spot, as we do not have enough scientific data on water. We do not have enough data on rainfall, pollution, ground water level, rivers drying up etc. The best way to contribute to data generation is to involve the citizens and start documenting at the local level. At the same time, citizen-based documentation can also look into the observation of climate change impacts. Simplified equipment, assessment instruments can be used. This will be a primary source and a solid foundation for scientific data that we have been talking about. (Focus on citizen-based documentation of water issues)

13) There are several youth forums in North East India. There is also a PAN Indian youth forum. Let's look into connecting with those forums. This forum can work as a think tank or a support group for the youth groups. Let the youth make more and more documentation on water issues.

14) We should have one session for policy makers. If we can bring them, it would be very effective towards immediate redressal of water issues in our own respective terms.





Theme : Way Forward -II

15) There are lots and lots of solutions for the problems we have. In future, before we have a water talk, let every state team have a state water talk in advance so that they don't get lost on what to share on this bigger platform.

16) There is too much focus on forest. We need to change the way and we need to focus more on water. Forests cannot exist without water.

17) Water needs more publicity. Let us create a forum on social media and publicise the things that we have been talking about. Drawing murals, wall paintings and making it a public campaign is a good idea.

18) What is the per capita requirement of water for women? Find out the data and segregate it from the general data. Water consumption is gender blind.





The Water Talks Team is thankful to MAC and the TMPK, MMK and TMMK for offering an indigenous Mising traditional food. It was not only delicious enough, but it also symbolises a strong bonding and commitment to work together.





Way Forward

Just after the lunch, based on the two day's discussion, a way forward note was prepared and placed in front of the delegates.

Presentation of Draft Way forward (Achieve SDGs -2030)

(read out by Thomas Malsom)

- 1) The continuation of water stories (stories related to climate change, gender, inequality, basin wise stories, etc.)
- 2) More documentation in audiovisual form(Podcast, Narrations, short videos, etc)
- 3) Increased targets for engaging students and youth across Universities, colleges...
- 4) Compilations of our own stories about water.
- 5) We need more people from as many communities to be involved.
- 6) A bi-monthly newsletter with a rotating team of editors and local coordinators.
- 7) Working with universities in the region to organise training sessions.
- 8) The water policy of Northeast India is being discussed.
- 9) Future objectives can be transformed from water talk (is going to continue) to water works.

Based on this note, the following activities are planned for NEIWT to hold for future course of journey.

Collection of Water stories: The primary objective of the Northeast India Water talks is to carry out water stories. In order to achieve this, we must organise the stories as follows:

- a. Stories about "water and climate change."
- b. Women and the water.
- c. Water stories on;
 - "Best practices for managing water in North-East"
 - "The role of water in decision-making."

The stories should be published regularly on different platforms, such as the NEI water talk portal, Facebook, YouTube, local media, and other media that want to publish them. Since we have decided to produce a regular compilation of water stories from Northeast India, we also need to publish a Compendium of water stories in a series. Additionally, we are looking to publish the area-specific stories in book form, in the local language as well.

An update on Northeast India's water: A bi-monthly update on water issues in Northeast India should be planned with a rotating team of editors and local coordinators.





Way Forward

Water talks at the river basin level: In order to overcome the political barriers to regionalisation, it was advised to go for River basin level talks in the upcoming days of work. A place where participants will spend a day together, either virtual or physically.

NEIWT must organise water talks in (thematic) ways; some of the proposed themes are:

1. The relationship between water and climate change,
2. Women and water,
3. Best practices for water management in Northeast East India,
4. The role of water in the governance process,
5. Water and forest,
6. Water and laws,
7. Water and media. etc.

The water programme at Universities:

We need to arrange a training program for university students about water.

Journalists, academics, and others need to be involved. We're committed to collaborating with academic institutions.



A person wearing a mask in Majuli.

Policy engagement: We are committed to creating an environment that will allow us to work at the local level. To achieve this, we will work with local autonomous councils and district councils first and then with the state departments and ministries related to water.

Knowledge centre for water: We will be looking for a place to develop a knowledge centre for Northeast water. This is the first step towards the establishment of a knowledge campus for NE WATER (virtual/physical)

Regional water talk: We will be having regional water talk continuously. For the next water talk it was proposed by Tripura, Arunachal and Nagaland.

Northeast water tour is also a good idea to raise more awareness about water in the region.

In addition to all of the above, we will be taking part in exhibitions, meetings, and seminars organised by different platforms/institutions to share about NEIWT.



The practice of donning a mask in Majuli is known as the "bhaona."



CLOSING CEREMONY

An interaction with forest man of India: **Padmashree Jadav Payeng** : It was a very casual conversation with Mr. Payeng, where he spoke his heart out and applauded the NEIWT initiatives. In the gathering, Payeng said, "Whatever we are doing, whether it's economy or politics, nature is above all. I believe in working with nature and I believe it is important to me. Right now, the earth is just getting sick with a cold, but when it gets worse, we will be no more. No one teaches children to love the earth in any school. We make big mosques and temples that show the presence of God. Who sees God? Please let me know if you can. There are none. We are creating big things for him, whom we have not seen yet. But who gives us life, the tree, Nature, we are able to see, is the true God. For him, we are doing nothing. So, I call on everyone to work for nature. Thank you for taking this initiative."





WATER PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD

Results of the best **water photography** competition were declared. Girin Chetia declares that, out of the 50 photos chosen, a group of photographers from NEIWT has picked the best picture. The award will be presented during the upcoming water talk. This year the best photography award by NEIWT goes to **Diganta Rajkhowa**.





Special recognition

for contributions to the water sector in the northeastern part of India:

Dr. Partha Jyoti Das has been honoured for his lifetime contribution to the water sector in Northeast India.





Following individuals are being honoured by NEIWT for their contribution to the social sector:



Mr. Mrinal Gohain



Mr. Girin Chetia



HONoured BY NEIWI

Mr. Sanat Kumar Chakraborty



Mr. Rabindra Nath



HONOURED BY NEIWT

Dr. Amba Jamir



Mr. Paramananda Chayengiya

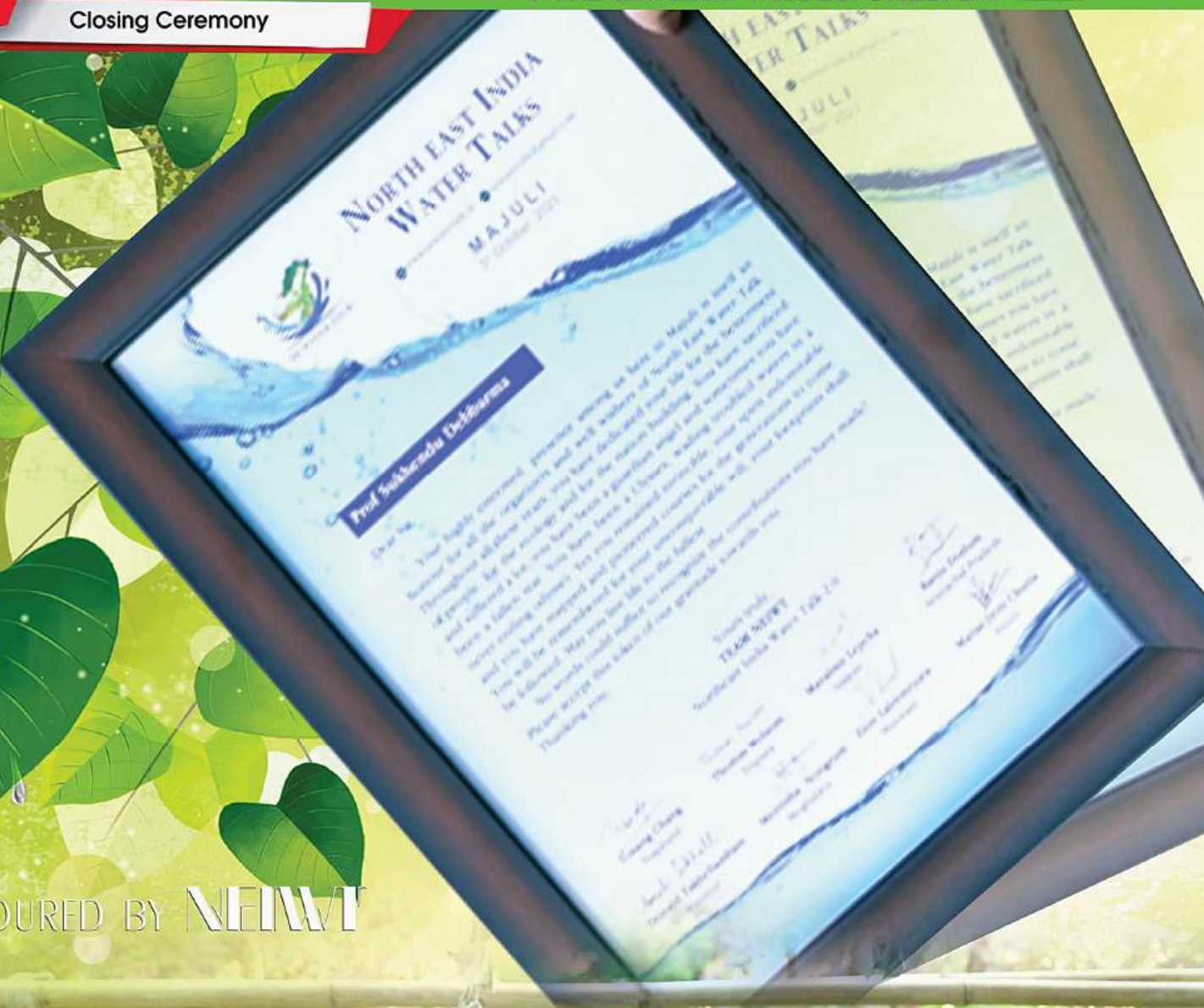


HONOURED BY NEIWT

Dr. Deben Sarmah



Mr. Chenithung Humtsoe, Dr. Tomi Ete and Jarjum Ete



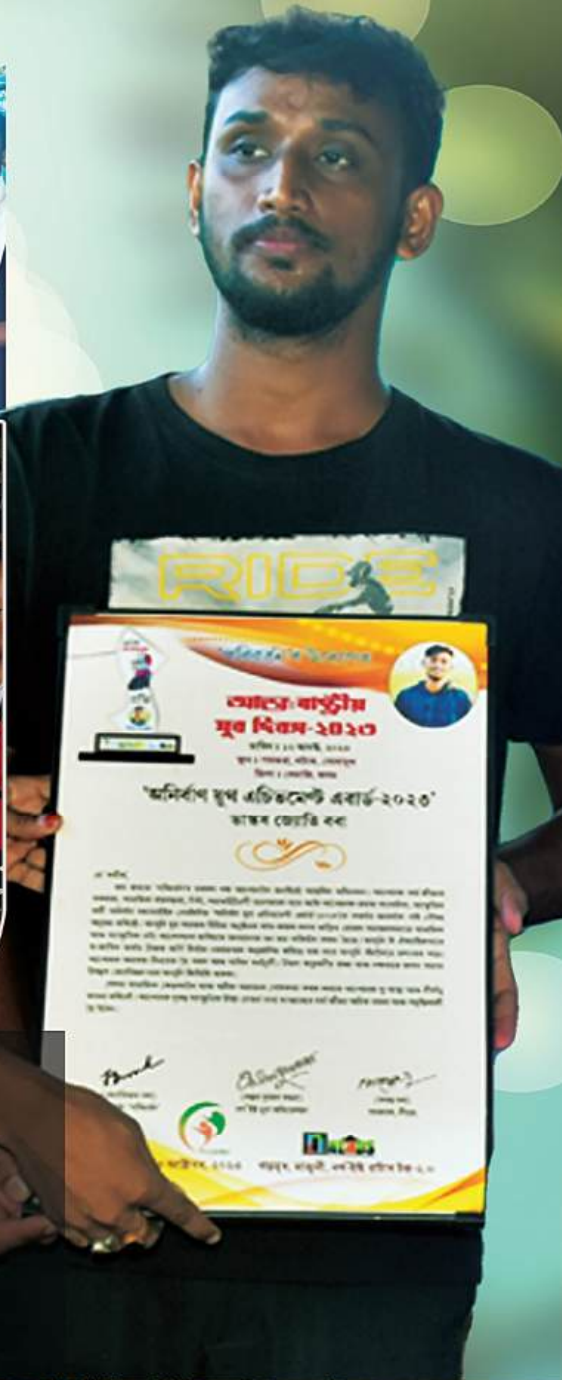
HONoured BY NEIWT



Prof. Sukhendu Debbarma



Special thanks to Marion Regina Mueller



Anirban Youth Achievers Award

was presented to **Bhaskar J Borah** in the presence of the Forest Man of India, **Padmashree Jabab Payeng**, and the Chief of Mising Autonomous Council.





FEEDBACKS

Punam Paul (NEHU), "I am grateful to the organiser for giving me this big opportunity. I truly enjoyed the whole three days we spent here. A lot of things I learned. Not only that, but I have been cleared of many doubts about water thanks to all the resource persons who shared their ideas among us these days. I am deeply grateful for this. Thanks a lot."

Paramanada Chayengia said that "because of the connectivity projects, Majuli Island will lose its character. This is extremely unfortunate. Easy connectivity is important, but we're losing characters of our own. Water scarcity is a problem everywhere. In my place also, the groundwater goes down forty feet. Water is a tough subject to deal with. Thank you all for coming to Majuli and talking about this important topic".

Chayengiya promised that MAC will support a publication if it is coming out to update northeast water.





At last, all the participants are felicitated with an Érkog; the Mising traditional shawl by the TMPK, MMK, and TMMK.

END OF North-East India Water Talk 2.0



Vote of thanks:
The NEIWT-2.0 ended with
everyone thanking each other.





Northeast India Water Talk-2.0

- let's document water stories from northeast

1st, 2nd and 3rd October, 2023

Ayang Okum,
Citadarchuk,
Garmur, Majuli, Assam



Goal 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation

- 6.1 safe and affordable drinking water for all
- 6.2 end open defecation, access to sanitation and hygiene
- 6.3 improve water quality, wastewater treatment and reuse
- 6.4 increase water-use efficiency and ensure supply of freshwater
- 6.5 implement integrated water resources management
- 6.a expand water and sanitation support to developing countries
- 6.b local communities in improving water and sanitation management



HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
REGIONAL OFFICE NEW DELHI



Supported by :

The NEIWT is thankful to all the organisation and individuals who made this event successful. Thanks to the organisations: Heinrich Boil Stiftung -Delhi Regional office, NEADS, NatGhar Majuli, , Mising Autonomous Council, Action Aid Association, Rural Volunteer Centre, Kamalabari Satra, ACT, Parivartan, Enchanting Majuli, Ayang Okum, PDS, Salmora Village, Major Chapoi Village. And special thanks to Mr. Tularam Gogoi, Prof. Sukhendu Debbarma, Dr. Partha J Das, Mrinal Gohain, Hema Das, Tirtha Pasad Saikia, Chenithung Humtsoe. Rabindra Nath, Jarjume Ete, Ranjita Bania, Deban Sarma and Girin Chetia for their contribution and guidance.

Expenditure Statement :

In the NEIWT - 2.0 we have spent 11,43,932/- (Eleven Lakh forty-three thousand nine hundred thirty-two rupees) in total. NEIWT again grateful to all, who have contributed for this great cause.

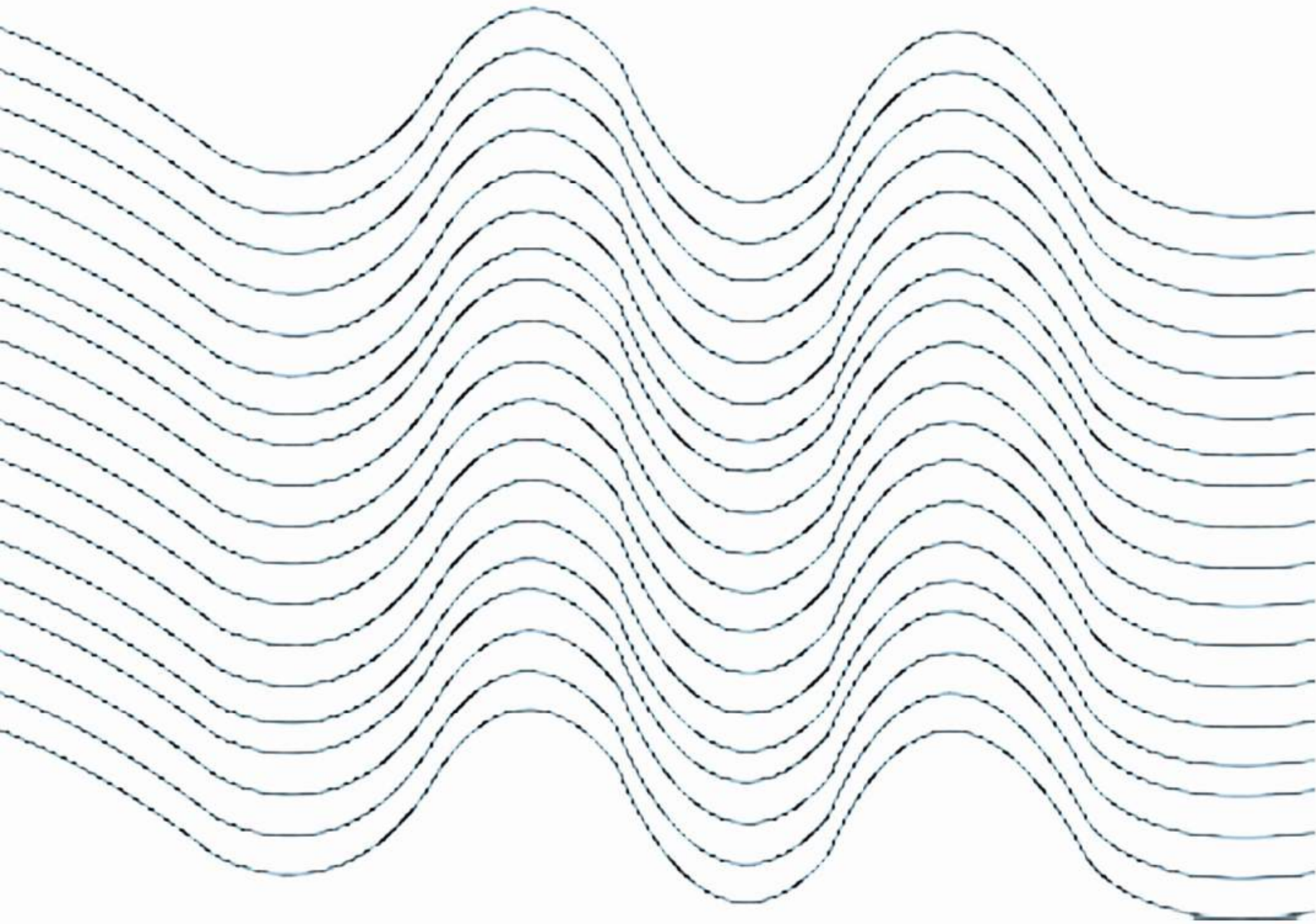


Team from Dhakuwakhana



Team from Dibrugarh University





Cocpet and Design:

K. K. Chataradhara

Zonak Jugantar Borah



Delegates from Arunachal Pradesh



Delegates from Nagaland



Delegates from Tripura





Tripura



Meghalaya



Manipur





PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION



Fisherman's Hub

Location: River Kaitong, Dhemaji | Photo by: Arpan Jyoti Boruah



PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION





Art work by Zonak and Zatrik



Messages Messages Messages

Messages

Messages

Messages

Messages

Messages



"The language of water is the same. We need to understand what the water is trying to say."
- Minket Lepcha



"North-East India Water Talk was conceived as a Vikalp Sangram, an alternative way of thinking about water and environment in North-East India, in December 2018. It is inspiring to see the journey that this initiative has made in just four years to become a unique platform for discussion, documentation and storytelling around water in North-East India. This initiative has also been compiled into a compilation titled 'A Compendium of Water Stories from North-East India' that consists of 80 articles. I was fortunate to be part of its launch in Baling, Arunachal Pradesh in May 2023. The North-East India Water Talk - 2 is an earnest proof of the efforts that organizers have taken up over the years and I send them all my best wishes for the event."
- Parag Jyoti Saha



"When north-east India Water Talk foregrounds water, the lifeblood of civilisation, as the subject of conversation, Water should indeed be the subject that makes us think and work toward its preservation and flow, and not just an object upon which we act unthinkingly. It is fitting that the talks are being held at Majuli, the sacred, also sadly eroding, piece of land at the heart of the mighty Brahmaputra. May there be a new beginning toward our shared hydraulic future!"
- Torney Sharma

Messages Messages Messages



"We, human beings survive because of them, the natural environment of the Earth. Water being an important entity, it is crucial for us to reflect to the connection we have with the very entity. The ongoing digitalised generation, we sometimes fail to recognise the bond we have with the river flowing beside us, that constantly flowed on her journey as we grew up. NE India WaterTalk is such beautiful platform that shed light to reflecting, encouraging as well documenting water stories through the lens of youth. The space where youths were guided and their voices, their stories were heard. I'm so grateful to be a part of this beautiful journey, to witness the voices being embraced and aswell to see all North East coming together and speaking about their part of the story and struggles about the freedom of rivers."



"Water is precious as well as necessary, so why not talk a bit more about it? In the urge of development, let's not forget how far nature can take us away for just a single drop of potable water. So next time whenever we feel free for atleast 2 minutes; we ought to talk for these precious drops again and again."

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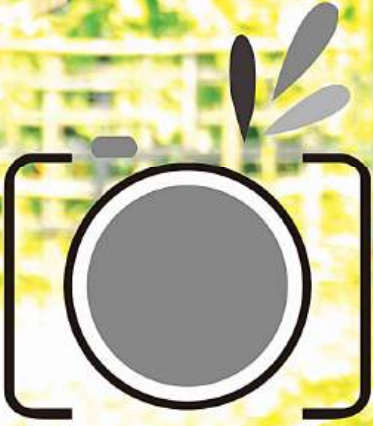
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Time Flies, Water Flows