IIT Mandi Faculty Releases Book on 'Politics of ethnic renewal' in Himalayan Region

The book is being published by Routledge, Taylor and Francis

Video Byte – https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1J4fSeJlwAVLCM3MxZvXSkiFbfp2tUGRl

Mandi, 23rd March 2023: Indian Institute of Technology Mandi Faculty Dr. Nilamber Chhetri, Assistant Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences has released a book titled 'Politics of ethnic renewal' published by Routledge, Taylor and Francis. The book talks about the ethnopolitics of Darjeeling unfolding in recent years.

The book discusses the upsurge of demands for recognition as a scheduled tribe which marks a watershed in the long quest to assert belongingness, rights, and autonomy in the nation-state. Empirical in approach the book interrogates the varied forms of ethnic practices and explore complex discourse of ethnic mobilization in hills, thereby, linking it to wider politics of classification and categorization in contemporary India.

From demands based on formation of a separate state, to current struggles for recognition as scheduled tribes, the book offers an in-depth understanding of the charred ethno-politics of Darjeeling.

Speaking about the book, Dr. Nilamber Chhetri, IIT Mandi, said, *"The book is timely as it considers the discursive strategies adopted by ethnic associations to frame their identities as primitive and indigenous groups inhabiting the hills. While doing so the book captures the practices through which ethnic group re-cast their identities and retrace their genealogy in the ritual context."*

Further, he mentioned, *"In this regard the book offers a crucial reading of the performative and discursive claims of ethnic groups in Darjeeling. The book also offers a diachronic analysis of ethnic mobilisation based on regional and group recognition in Darjeeling."*

The book illustrates the nature of such demands and the ways in which people in daily life negotiate with the collective and exclusive identity claims. The book demonstrates that the ethnopolitics unfolding in Darjeeling have a wide-scale

application to understand similar recognition struggles unfolding in South Asia. It argues that the recent mobilizations for ST status are determined by the wider politics of classification and categorization in contemporary India and calls for a reassessment of the yardsticks for recognition.

In this regard the book initiates a timely discussion on the discourse of recognition, politics of difference and alterity unfolding in South Asia. And how amidst these concerns the category of tribe is contested and negotiated by the groups and the state.

The book is designed for academics, students, and research scholars working on issues of state classification and politics of categorization. The book in particular would be of specific interest to scholars adopting multi-disciplinary approach to understand the South Asian reality. Policy makers, activists, and students of law can also benefit a lot from the engaged discussion on the classificatory practices and discourse of cultural rights and affirmative action in India.

The book would be of immense interest for post-colonial scholars, students interested in Himalayan region, and scholars dealing with South Asian social and political reality in general. By offering empirical illustration laded with theoretical discussion the book provides new avenues to rethink the category of scheduled tribe and classification practices in India.

About IIT Mandi
IIT Mandi has nine Academic Schools and five major Research Centers. The Schools are the School of Biosciences and Bioengineering (SBBE), School of Chemical Sciences (SCS), School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences (SMSS), School of Physical Sciences (SPS), School of Mechanical and Materials Engineering (SMME), School of Civil and Environmental Engineering (SCENE), School of Computing and Electrical Engineering (SCEE), School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS), and School of Management (SOM). The Centers are Advanced Materials Research Centre (AMRC), Centre for Design and Fabrication of Electrical Devices (C4DFED), BioX Centre, Indian Knowledge System and Mental Health Applications Centre (IKSMHA Centre) and Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics.

The Institute offers B.Tech. programs in seven different streams, one M.A. program, ten M.Tech. programs, nine Ph.D. programs, and one iPh.D. program. The unique, project-oriented B.Tech. curriculum is centered around its 4-year long Design and Innovation stream. Since the inception of the Institute, IIT Mandi faculty have been involved in over 275 Research and Development (R&D) projects worth more than Rs. 120 crores.

IIT Mandi established the IIT Mandi iHub and HCI Foundation (iHub; a section-8 company) on its campus at Kamand with significant funding of INR 110 crores from the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India. The iHub is planned to fuel research and technology development, skill development, startup and innovation, and collaborations

in the HCI and allied AI/ML areas in India. IIT Mandi is the only second-generation IIT to be featured at rank 7 in the Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements of the Innovation Cell, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India.

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