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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

I am delighted to introduce you to the Centre of Central Asian Studies at the University of Kashmir. With great pleasure, I present this brochure as a testament to the extraordinary work and commitment of our faculty, researchers, and students towards understanding and exploring the rich cultural, historical, and socio-political landscape of Central Asia.

At the University of Kashmir, we believe in the vision of to be a world-class University committed to creating and disseminating knowledge for human development and welfare, with a mission to create an intellectually stimulating environment, promote excellence in teaching, research and extension activities and facilitate academic freedom, diversity, and harmony. The Centre of Central Asian Studies exemplifies the vision to create and disseminate knowledge for human development and welfare. The Centre of Central Asian Studies further adds to the academic excellence and international engagement, as we strive to become a hub for Central Asian research, teaching, and cultural exchange.

Central Asia, with its diverse and fascinating civilizations, holds immense significance in our globalized world. The region's ancient *Silk Road* heritage, vibrant cultural traditions, and complex geopolitical dynamics offer a wealth of opportunities for interdisciplinary study and scholarly exploration. The Centre of Central Asian Studies is dedicated to unlocking these treasures and unravelling the nuances that shape Central Asia's past, present, and future.

Through innovative research projects, conferences, seminars, and publications, our centre aims to facilitate intellectual discourse and nurture a deeper understanding of Central Asia's rich tapestry. Our distinguished faculty, comprised of leading experts in their respective fields, are committed to producing rigorous research and fostering a vibrant academic community.

Moreover, the Centre of Central Asian Studies catalyzes academic collaboration, fostering partnerships with esteemed institutions, scholars, and organizations both within Central Asia and around the globe. Through these alliances, we aim to strengthen academic networks, promote cultural exchange, and advance knowledge sharing in the region.

We are proud to offer a wide range of academic programs and courses that provide our scholars with the opportunity to specialize in Central Asian studies. The centre also encourages scholars to engage in fieldwork in Central Asian regions, and language learning to develop a holistic understanding of the region. In addition to academic pursuits, the Centre of Central Asian Studies hosts a variety of events, exhibitions, and public lectures that promote intercultural understanding and appreciation. By fostering an inclusive and intellectually stimulating environment, we strive to inspire the next generation of scholars, policymakers, and leaders who will contribute to the sustainable development and peaceful coexistence of Central Asia and its neighbouring regions.

We invite you to explore this brochure highlighting various activities at the Centre of Central Studies held during the year 2023 and discover the wealth of opportunities awaiting you at the Centre of Central Asian Studies. Whether you are a student, researcher, or simply curious about the region, we look forward to welcoming you into our academic community and embarking on a remarkable journey together.

Prof. Tabasum Firdous

Director

1: Conferences and Seminars in the Year 2023

The Centre of Central Asian Studies at the University of Kashmir is committed to fostering academic dialogue and intellectual exchange in Central Asian studies. As part of our mission, we regularly organize conferences and seminars that bring together scholars, researchers, students, policymakers, and cultural experts from around the world. These events serve as platforms for sharing knowledge, exchanging ideas, and promoting a deeper understanding of Central Asia. Here is a brief introduction to the conferences and seminars conducted by our esteemed institution during this academic year:

I: International Scientific Conference "Reconstructing the Human Population Histories of South Asia using Archaeology and Genetics"

The Centre of Central Asian Studies at the University of Kashmir organized A Three-Day International Scientific Conference on "Reconstructing the Human Population Histories of South Asia using Archaeology and Genetics" from 7th June 2023 to 9th June 2023. This Conference was jointly organized by the Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, and Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences, Lucknow, funded by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. The conference brought together experts, scholars, and researchers from around the world to explore the intersection of archaeology and genetics in unravelling the complex human population histories of South Asia.

The inaugural of the conference was held at Gandhi Bhawan on 9th June 2023 with Her Excellency, **Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi Ji,** Minister of State for Culture and External Affairs, Government of India as the Chief Guest graced the occasion with her presidential address. Further **Shri Sanjeev Sanyal** Secretary, Economic Advisory Council to the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Government of India graced the occasion with a Keynote address along with **Prof. Partha Pratim Majumder** Founder Director, National Institute of Biomedical Genomics, Kalyani was the Keynote speaker on the occasion. **Dr Kumarasamy Thangaraj**, Director of Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics, Hyderabad, India and CSIR, CCMB gave his special remarks about DNA Fingerprinting and Diagnostics. **Prof. Nilofer Khan**, Vice-Chancellor University of Kashmir also gave special remarks about the conference.

A primary objective of this conference was to encourage multidisciplinary investigations in archaeological sciences in the country by considering challenges and unanswered questions unique to the region. By bringing together more than 50 experts in complementary fields from India and abroad - including archaeology, anthropology, genetics, computational biology, geosciences, archaeobotany, and zooarchaeology - this platform fostered an exchange of ideas and networking between researchers with shared

goals and interests in human, animal, and plant histories as well as past environments, using established and new scientific methods.

Throughout the conference, participants presented more than 50 research papers, and poster presentations, shared case studies, and engaged in panel discussions on a wide range of topics. These included the analysis of ancient DNA, population genetics, migration patterns, the impact of cultural exchanges, and the role of archaeology in understanding the demographic history of South Asia. The conference also explored the implications of these findings for contemporary populations and the broader understanding of human history. Experts highlighted the significance of integrating archaeological and genetic approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of South Asia's human population histories. The conference showcased cutting-edge research methodologies, analytical techniques, and advancements in genetic sequencing technologies that enable researchers to uncover ancient DNA and trace human migrations and interactions over time.













II: Two-Day National Conference on "Connecting Central Asia: Opportunities and Challenges" (01st -2nd November 2022).

The Centre of Central Asian Studies organized a Two-Day National Conference on "Connecting Central Asia: Opportunities and Challenges" at the Ibn-e-Khaldoon Auditorium, University of Kashmir. Noted intellectuals, academics, and participants from various parts of the country attended the event. Prof. Tabassum Firdous, Director of the Centre, emphasized the significance of India-Central Asian relations amid China's assertiveness. Keynote speaker, Mr. Ashok Sajjanhar, former Ambassador to Kazakhstan, Sweden, and Latvia, discussed the importance of closer ties between India and Central Asian republics. Prof. A.M. Matoo explored the historical influences of Central Asia on Kashmiri culture, advocating for the reopening of historical Silk Road routes. The papers presented covered diverse topics, including historical connections, trade relations, governance, renewable energy, and geopolitical strategies. The event featured a book release: "Revisiting Himalayan Borderlands: A Bridge Between India and Central Asia." The conference facilitated insightful discussions on various aspects of Central Asia, fostering academic exchange and understanding.









III. National Seminars on Philosophers Day

The Centre of Central Asian Studies at the University of Kashmir regularly organizes national seminars focusing on themes, issues, or countries within Central Asia. These seminars serve as platforms for in-depth discussions on various topics, including language, literature, religion, geopolitics, economic development, and social transformations. Notably, a recent seminar in collaboration with the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR) explored the "Contributions of Philosophical Thought from Kashmir." Held on May 29th-30th, 2023, the event showcased the rich philosophical heritage of Kashmir, featuring esteemed speakers such as Prof. Nelofer Khan, Prof. Basher Bashir, Dr. Satish Vimal, and Prof. G.N. Khaki. The sessions delved into diverse themes, including Buddhist Philosophy, Shaivism, Sufism, mysticism, poetry, literature, and the contributions of notable figures like Lal Ded, Saiyid Ali Hamdani, and Mirza Akmaludin Badakhshi. The seminar provided a comprehensive exploration of Kashmiri philosophy, fostering scholarly discussions and insights. The valedictory session, presided over by Prof. Irshad Ahmad Nawchoo, highlighted the interdisciplinary significance of Kashmiri philosophical concepts and encouraged continued exploration at the intersections of philosophy and science.





IV. Seminar on International Yoga Day-2023 on "significance of meditation in major religions on 19th July 2023

The Centre of Central Asian Studies at the University of Kashmir, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (ICPR), organized a One-Day National Seminar on the theme "Significance of Meditation in Major Religions" to commemorate International Yoga Day 2023. The event aimed to explore the impact of yoga on individuals, communities, and society, emphasizing its potential for promoting holistic health and fostering unity. Renowned scholars and researchers discussed the transformative power of meditation, shedding light on its importance in promoting spiritual growth, inner peace, and connection with the divine. The seminar featured insightful keynote and special addresses, as well as technical sessions exploring the significance of meditation in Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, Jal Neti practice, Sufism, Christian mysticism, and more. The valedictory session discussed the potential benefits of incorporating yoga practice sessions in university departments for students' physical and mental well-being.





2: Extension Lectures Series

To engage with a wider audience, the Centre of Central Asian Studies invited distinguished scholars, experts, and practitioners to deliver public lectures and participate in our guest speaker series. These events provide opportunities for students, faculty, and the general public to listen to insightful talks, gain new perspectives, and interact with leading voices in the field of Central Asian studies. The lectures and speaker series cover a diverse range of topics, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the region's past, present, and future. About five extension lectures were conducted by the Centre of Central Asian Studies during the year 2023.

The **first extension** lecturer of the year was organized by the Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, on 09-02-2023 at 11:30 am in the conference hall of the Centre in which Prof. (Rtd.) Ajay Kumar Patnaik, former Chairperson of Russian and Central Asian Studies, School of International Studies, JNU, Delhi, delivered a talk on "War in Ukraine and Geopolitics of Central Asia". The session was inaugurated by Prof. Tabasum Firdous, Director of the Centre, who highlighted the contribution of guest speakers to the Centre of Central Asian Studies which primarily includes extension lectures, mentorship to scholars and recognition of the Centre at national and international levels. Faculty members and scholars of the Centre and other institutions attended the lecture.

Prof. Patnaik argued that there are "more important aspects of the Ukraine War that are not evident in the mainstream media which generally centres around Russia's offensive in Ukraine." But there is more to the story than these simplistic assumptions and judgements. Much of this seeming propaganda has to do with the West's anxiety about Russia being the most powerful nuke state at the moment. West has put much effort into inducing a market economy in Russia, ever since the fall of the USSR, even before that. Despite this fall, West pumped many resources into consolidating and expanding NATO, especially in 1997 (Eastwards, towards the Russian border). The session ended with scholars and the faculty raising queries and doubts while interacting with the speaker.





The **second extension** lecturer of the year was organized by the Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, on 16-02-2023 at 11:30 am in the conference hall of the Centre in which Prof. Nasir Raza Khan, Honorary Director of the Arab Culture Centre at Jamia Millia Islamia New Delhi, delivered a talk on" The Origin and Development of Timurid Architecture in India and Central Asia". The session was inaugurated by Prof. Tabasum Firdous, Director of the Centre. Prof. Nasir Raza Khan spoke about the overall development of Timurid Architecture in Central Asia. He presented different Timurid buildings and architectural marvels, different shapes and arches that developed over time and engineering. Prof. Khan also highlighted distinctive features of Timurid architecture as it developed and spread, including in India. One of the fascinating features of Timurid architecture is a special focus on the aesthetics of the outside rather than the inside of the structures or buildings.





The **third extension** lecturer of the year was organized by the Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, on 23-02-2023 at 02:00 pm in the conference hall of the Centre in which Prof. Vasant Shinde former Vice Chancellor of Deccan College PGRI Pune, delivered a talk on "Recent Archaeogenetic Research and India's Central Asian connection from 3rd millennium BCE". The session was inaugurated by Prof. Tabassum Firdous, Director of the Centre. Faculty members and scholars of the Centre and other Departments attended the lecture. Prof. Vasant Shinde spoke about recent archaeogenetic research carried out in the Harappan site of Rakhigarhi in Haryana. Prof. Shinde started the lecture with a brief introduction to early farming communities and Harappan civilization. The main focus remained on the DNA of Harappans. DNA of the Rakhigarhi skeleton revealed ancestry of the Harappan people. The Harappan are native and their DNA is still found in the majority of the Indian population. It suggests South Asians can

trace their ancestry to the Indus Valley Civilization. Prof. Shinde concluded the lecture with India's Central Asian connection right from Harappan times. The session ended with scholars and the faculty raising queries and doubts while interacting with Prof. Vasant Shinde.



The **fourth extension** lecturer of the year was organized by the Centre of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, on 28-04-2023 at 11:30 am in the conference hall of the Centre in which Professor Gulshan Dietl, a retired Professor at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University delivered a talk on "Iran in/and Central Asia".





3: Faculty interaction

Many faculty members from Centre of Central Asian Studies, visited universities in India and other countries as visiting professors or for delivering special lectures. They shared their knowledge about Central Asian history and culture, helping students and scholars broaden their understanding. This initiative aimed to promote cultural exchange and create connections between different academic communities, emphasizing the importance of global collaboration in the field of Central Asian studies.

Professor Tabasum Firdous, Director of the Centre, was also invited to participate in the International Conference on 'Abu Raihan Al-Biruni: Historical and Contemporary Relevance' organized by India-Central Asia Foundation-ICAF, New Delhi, on 29th September 2023. She presented a paper on 'Al-Biruni in the 21st Century.' Her paper majorly focused on how Travel literature and travelogues encourage people from India and Central Asian nations can enable literature exploration opportunities. She stressed on the importance of the employment of historical narrative to infuse the two regions and more specifically of India and Uzbekistan, particularly our younger generations, to advance towards developing human relationships and values in years to come. The paper evaluated the contribution of Al-Biruni in explaining Indian culture and society. The main objective of the paper was to search the relevance of literature and literary figures in fostering the bilateral relations between India and Uzbekistan as a successful soft power instrument in the current global era. She also chaired a session on the Al-Biruni's Literature and its relevance.





Another faculty Member from Centre, Dr. Ajmal Shah visited Paris as Visiting Professor

4: Research Activities

The Centre of Central Asian Studies at the University of Kashmir is a renowned research institution dedicated to the exploration and understanding of the Central Asian region. The centre focuses on conducting rigorous academic research, fostering intellectual exchange, and promoting cultural understanding between Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. The research activities at the Centre of Central Asian Studies encompass a wide range of disciplines, including history, political science, anthropology, sociology, economics, Persian, Kashmiri, Sanskrit and cultural studies. Scholars and researchers affiliated with the centre delve into various aspects of Central Asian societies, cultures, politics, and economies, aiming to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of this dynamic region. The centre conducts both theoretical and empirical research projects that investigate issues of regional significance and global relevance. Researchers at the centre engage in archival research, fieldwork, data analysis, and academic collaborations to produce insightful and scholarly publications, which further enrich the existing body of knowledge on Central Asia. Moreover, the Centre of Central Asian Studies promotes academic dialogue and intellectual exchange through conferences, seminars, and workshops. These platforms provide opportunities for researchers, experts, and scholars from different parts of the world to come together, share their findings, and engage in meaningful discussions. These events also foster interdisciplinary approaches and encourage collaboration among researchers with diverse backgrounds and expertise. The centre's commitment to cultural understanding is evident through its efforts to promote Central Asian culture, arts, and literature. It actively supports initiatives that aim to preserve and promote the rich cultural heritage of the region, organizing cultural events, exhibitions, and festivals. Through its diverse research activities, academic exchanges, and cultural initiatives, the centre contributes to the broader academic community's knowledge and appreciation of Central Asia's history, societies, and cultures.

During this year about 12 students were awarded with Ph.D. Degrees

S .NO	Name of the Scholar	Discipline
1	Ishfaq Farooq	Geography
2	Mudasir A lone	Islamic Studies
3	Saika Shafi	Islamic Studies
4	Mufazil Ali	Library & Information Science
5	Hafsa Gulzar	Political Science
6	Tawseef Ahmad Mir	Political Science
7	Nargis Jan	Political Science

8	Sameer Ahmad Khanday	Political Science
9	Syed Sabaji	Islamic Studies
10	Javid Ahmad Bhat	Islamic Studies
11	Imran Khan	Islamic Studies
12	Asiya Mustafa	Persian





The scholars at the Centre of Central Asian Studies are actively engaged in a comprehensive research approach that involves regular fieldwork. This entails the scholars visiting various Central Asian countries to gather first-hand data for their Ph.D. research projects. The purpose of this fieldwork is to immerse themselves directly in the cultural, social, economic, and political contexts of the regions they are studying. The process typically involves a meticulous plan, where researchers identify specific locations, communities, and relevant sources of information that align with their research objectives. Fieldwork often includes interviews with local residents, government officials, and experts in the field, as well as the collection of archival data, documents, and other relevant materials. These scholars prioritize the acquisition of primary data, recognizing its significance in contributing to the authenticity and depth of their research. By physically being present in the Central Asian countries they are studying, researchers can observe and analyze events, trends, and phenomena in real time, gaining insights that might be challenging to obtain solely through secondary sources. Fieldwork not only enhances the quality of their PhD research but also allows scholars to establish personal connections and networks within the Central Asian academic and research communities. This direct engagement fosters a deeper understanding of the local perspectives, challenges, and opportunities, enriching the overall academic discourse on Central Asian studies.

One of our researchers, **Liyakat Ahmad Bhat**, a serious student from the University of Kashmir, went to Central Asia for three months to study "Migration and Social Change in Kyrgyzstan." He conducted this independent research without external financial support, highlighting both his commitment to scholarly pursuits and the Centre for Central Asian Studies' dedication to fostering high-quality research. His study carefully looks at how migration affects society, using interviews, group discussions, and direct observations in migrant communities. He wants to understand how migration changes things like culture, the economy, and communities in Central Asia, especially in Kyrgyzstan. As he continues his research, he plans to share a detailed analysis in his upcoming thesis. This shows the centre's dedication to making sure their research is thorough and contributes to our understanding of the complex societies in Central Asia.





The Central Asia arranged a two-day trip to Gurez Valley. The goal was to revisit the old routes that were crucial for trade, commerce, and religious activities in the past. These routes were like ancient highways connecting different places. The focus was on understanding why these routes were so important historically and how they impacted the culture and economy of the region. They were not just paths for people to travel; they were the lifelines for the exchange of goods, services, and religious ideas. Gurez Valley, with its stunning views, was a key spot where Kashmir connected with Central Asian countries. The routes through Gurez were historically linking Kashmir with places in Central Asia. These links, established through centuries of trading and cultural interactions, have left a lasting impact on how Kashmir's society, economy, and culture

developed. The field trip, well-organized by the Centre of Central Asian Studies, let scholars and participants dive into the history of these routes. By checking out the remnants of old trade and cultural exchanges, they got a firsthand look at how civilizations were connected back in the day. The Gurez Valley, once buzzing with trade caravans and pilgrims, still holds echoes of its vibrant past, shaping the identity and heritage of Kashmir. A group of approximately 13 PhD scholars took part in the field visit, and they were accompanied by two esteemed faculty members.





5: News Scan

KU's CCAS organises extension lecture on Timurid Architecture

Srinagar, Feb 16: Prof Nasir Raza, Honorary Director of Arab Culture Centre at Jamia Millia Islamia New Delhi, on Thursday delivered an extension lecture at the University of Kashmir, here.

The lecture titled 'The Origin and Development of Timurid Architecture in India and Central Asia' was organised by the varsity's Centre of Central Asian Studies (CCAS).

Director CCAS and Convenor of the programme, Prof Tabasum Firdous, delivered the welcome address and highlighted the significance of the extension lecture for the curriculum of the Centre.

Dr Mohammad Ajmal Shah, Coordinator of the programme, introduced the guest speaker and the theme of the lecture.

Several current and former faculty members were present on the occasion, including



ProfGNKhaki, Dr Darakshan Abdullah, Dr Mohammad Rafiuddin Makhdoomi and Dr Afaq Aziz Yetoo.

A good number of postdoctoral fellows and scholars of the Centreattended the lecture.

Prof Khan spoke about the overall development of Timurid Architecture in Central Asia. He presented different Timurid buildings and architectural marvels, different shapes and arches that developed over time.

Dr Khan also highlighted distinctive features of Timurid architecture as it developed and spread, including in India. One of the fascinating features of Timurid architecture is a special focus on aesthetics of the outside rather than inside of the structures or buildings.

The lecture ended with a question-answer session.



جنوبی ایشامیں انسانی آبادی کی تاریخ يريونيورسي مي**ن 3**روزه بين الاقوامي كانفرس كاافتتاح



لفحؤ اور تعمیر یو نیورٹی کے بینر آن بینٹرل ایشن اشدیز (CCAS) نے مہوتسو کے تحت مرکزی وزارت ثقافت کے تعاون ہے اس کانفرس کا انعقاد مشترك طور پركيا ب_اين/804

ثقافت اور امور بفارجه کی مرکزی وزیر مملکت میناکشی کیلھی نے بدھ کو تشمیر پونیورسیٔ میں' آثار قدیمه اور جینیات کا ائتعمال کرتے ہوئے جنوبی ایٹیا کی ایک تین روزه بین الاقوامی کانفرس کا افتتاح کیا، یہ ایک میگا ایوٹ ہے جو " تاز ونقط نظر'' کو فروغ دینے کے لیے مختلف شعبول کے ماہرین تعلیم اور ماہرین کواکٹھا کرتاہے۔آزادی کاامرت

PRECIOUS KASHMIR

NEWS

Union MoS for Culture inaugurates 3-day international conference at KU

VC, top officials, experts share dais at inaugural session

PRECIOUS KASHMIR NEWS | SRINAGAR

Union Minister of State for Culture and External Affairs, Meenakshi Lekhi, on Wednesday inaugurated a three-day international conference on 'Reconstructing the Human Histories of South Asia using Archaeol-ogy and Genetics' at the University of Kashmir, a mega event that brings

to rasmini, a maga event man or mgs together academics and experts from diverse disciplines to foster "fresh perspectives" on the theme. The Conference, supported by the Union Ministry of Culture under Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsay, has been jointly organised by Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences, Lucknow Institute of Palaeosciences, Lucknow and KU's Centre of Central Asian

Studies (CCAS).

In her presidential address,
Meenakshi Lekhi said the conference is a great opportunity to "build a comprehensive and complete narrative" of the evolution of human





Usually people would say that we haven't preserved our history,

is unbiased and goes by facts and scientists are not averse to be

scholars to explore the country's great civilizational heritage, including the diversity in cultures, the ancient art, and the vast spiritual

the ancient art, and the vast spiritual and scholarly contributions of great Indian scholars.

This event helps us to further advance the objectives of the National Education Policy-2020 which outlines the role of universities in

promoting the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research, she said. Prof Partha Prathim Majumder, Founder Director, National Institute of Biomedical Genomics, Kalyani, also delivered the keynote address on 'Genetic Structure of Contemporary Populations in South Asia: Learning

ropulations in South Asia: Learning from ancient DNA Research'. Dr Kumarasamy Thangarai, Director, Centre for DNA Fingerprinting and Diagonostis, Hyderabad, also shared his views on the conference theme.

A book titled 'Excavation Report





