



Australian
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ANU South Asia Research Institute Update Conference 2025



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South Asia
Research
Institute

Date: Tuesday 4 & Wednesday 5 November 2025

Time: 9.30am-5.30pm & 9am-4pm

Venue: Hedley Bull Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), Hedley Bull Building,
130 Garran Road, Australian National University

Wi-fi details

For the Update at Hedley Bull Building, please connect to the following Wi-fi:

- **Wi-fi:** ANU-Secure2
- **Username:** SARIUpdate2025
- **Password:** ANU2601!

Program

Day 1: Tuesday 4 November

All sessions: Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), 130 Garran Road

TIME	PROGRAM
9.30am	Registration & usher attendees to the lecture theatre
9.50am	Welcome and opening remarks Professor Matt Tomlinson, Director, School of Culture, History & Language, ANU
10.00am	Keynote Address Professor Robin Jeffrey, Emeritus Professor, ANU <i>Leaders and mobilisation in South Asia: Four countries, eight leaders</i> Chair: Assa Doron, ANU
11.00am	Morning tea
11.30am	Panel 1: Embodied Gendered Practices Shameem Black, Associate Professor, ANU <i>India, International Day of Yoga, and gendered tensions in the body politic</i> Megha Sharma, Visiting Fellow, ANU <i>Mapping labour In India: Gender, work and informality</i> Viyanga Gunasekera, PhD candidate, ANU <i>Women's negotiation of lived space in 'border villages' in postwar Sri Lanka</i> Maksuda Khanam, PhD candidate, ANU <i>From normal to caesarean: The childbirth experience of middle-class women in Dhaka, Bangladesh</i> Chair: Kalpana Ram, Honorary Professor, ANU
1.00pm	Lunch
2.00pm	Panel 2: Entangled Ecologies Assa Doron, Professor, ANU <i>Waste, labour, and the infrastructure of resistance</i> Muhammad Kavesh, Associate Professor, ANU <i>The beast of burden: Becoming donkey In Pakistan</i> Chitra V, Lecturer, ANU <i>Ways of knowing the water: Fishing economies and more-than-human entanglements along Mumbai's shore</i> Hassan Virk, PhD candidate, ANU <i>Insignificant bodies: The forgotten female(s) In hunting narratives</i> Chair: Sango Mahanty, Professor, ANU
3.30pm	Afternoon tea
4.00pm	Panel 3: Infrastructures of Revival Mohammad Ibrahim Khalad, PhD candidate, ANU <i>The making and unmaking of an authoritarian regime: The July 2024 uprising in Bangladesh</i> Preeti Mudliar, Australia India Institute Fellow, University of Melbourne <i>The private lives of digital public infrastructures: Mobile phone ownership as a condition of inclusion in welfare</i> Nupur Joshi, Assistant Professor, Kalamazoo College <i>Heat stress and informal migrant workers in India</i> Nadine Vanniasinkam, PhD candidate, ANU <i>Rebuilding the village after the war: The politics of placemaking among the Northern Tamils of Sri Lanka</i> Chair: Nalin Mehta, Managing Editor, Moneycontrol; Chief AI Officer, Network 18, and Non-Resident Senior Fellow, ISAS, NUS
5.30pm	End of Day 1
6.00pm	Dinner (speakers & invited guests only)

Day 2: Wednesday 5 November

All sessions: Lecture Theatre 1 (HB1), 130 Garran Road

TIME	PROGRAM
9.00am	<p>Plenary: Power, Borders, and Populism in India Nalin Mehta, Managing Editor, Moneycontrol; Chief AI Officer, Network 18, and Non-Resident Senior Fellow, ISAS, NUS <i>India's big shift after Trump's tariffs: Global repositioning, Asian rebalancing and new economic trajectory</i> Malini Sur, Associate Professor, Western Sydney University <i>Unfinished margins: Borders, labour, and the postcolonial in South Asia and Australia</i> Priya Chacko, Associate Professor, University of Adelaide <i>Conspiracy theories and India's transnational authoritarian populism: NGOs, Khalistanis and Soros</i> Chair: Annabel Dulhunty, Senior Lecturer, ANU</p>
11.00am	<p><i>Morning tea</i></p>
11.30am	<p>Panel 1: Voices of Resistance Hafeez A. Jamali, Director General, Balochistan Civil Services Academy, Pakistan <i>Land, bureaucracy, and resistance: Negotiating place and power in Gwadar port city, Pakistan</i> Sahiba Maqbool, Lecturer, Monash University <i>A critique of postcolonial sovereignty: Perspectives from Jammu and Kashmir</i> Fazal Wahab, PhD candidate, ANU <i>Decolonising security knowledge through movement texts: Lessons from the PTM in Pakistan</i> Asaf Lone, PhD candidate, ANU <i>South Asian diasporic (trans)nationalism and transitional justice in Australia and beyond</i> Chair: Sana Jaffrey, Research Fellow and Lecturer, ANU</p>
1.00pm	<p><i>Lunch</i></p>
2.00pm	<p>Panel 2: Making South Asia's Urban Future Tanya Jakimow, Professor, ANU <i>Mahindra World City as cocoon and showcase: Place and self-making in a mature city from scratch</i> Remeen Firoz, PhD candidate, ANU <i>If walls could talk: 36th July 2024</i> Adam Sargent, Lecturer, ANU <i>"If not now then how will Delhi be built?" Bodily capacitations for cities yet to come</i> Ranu Kunwar, PhD candidate, ANU <i>Most hated in the city: How did India's electric vehicle revolution become a nuisance on roads?</i> Chair: Nadine Vanniasinkam, PhD candidate, ANU</p>
3.30pm	<p><i>Afternoon tea</i></p>
4.00pm	<p>End of SARI Update</p>
3.45pm	<p>DFAT-HDR student discussion (invited guests only)</p>

Update Speakers

Welcome

Professor Matt Tomlinson

Director, School of Culture, History & Language, ANU

Professor Matt Tomlinson is the Director of the School of Culture, History & Language at the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. He is a sociocultural anthropologist who studies the relationship between language, politics, and religious ritual.

Keynote speaker

Professor Robin Jeffrey

Emeritus Professor, ANU

Robin Jeffrey has D.Phil. in Indian history from Sussex University and has worked at ANU, La Trobe University and the National University of Singapore (NUS). He has written about Kerala, Punjab, and Indian newspapers. His most recent book, co-authored with Assa Doron, was *Waste of a Nation: Garbage and Growth in India* (2018). They also co-authored *The Great Indian Phone Book* (2013). His first book, based on his thesis, was *The Decline of Nayar Dominance* (1976). He lives in Melbourne and has an affiliation with the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore.

Panel 1: Embodied Gendered Practices

Shameen Black

Associate Professor, ANU

Shameem Black is an Associate Professor at the School of Culture, History & Language, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. Her research on the literary, gender, and cultural study of India and its diaspora has appeared in the *Journal of World Literature*, *South Asia*, *Contemporary South Asia*, and numerous other publications. Her most recent book is *Flexible India: Yoga's Cultural and Political Tensions* (Columbia UP, 2024). She is a co-editor of *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*.

Megha Sharma

Visiting Fellow, ANU

Megha Sharma is a visiting fellow at the ANU Australian Studies Institute. Her research interests include gender relations and the informal economy, and the global history of law and labour relations. Her recent publications examine the everyday worlds of domestic work and the informal economy, the politics and practice of digital archives, and pedagogical experiments within global history. She is currently working on a monograph on labour jurisprudence in post-independence India (1947–70) and co-editing a volume on legal consciousness in South Asia. She holds a PhD in History from Jawaharlal Nehru University, where her research examined labour jurisprudence in post-independence India.

Viyanga Gunasekera

PhD candidate, ANU

Viyanga Gunasekera is a PhD candidate at the School of Regulation and Global Governance (RegNet), ANU College of Law, Governance and Policy. Her research focuses on women's community making in war affected areas in postwar Sri Lanka. Her research interests are in post-conflict peacebuilding, pluralistic memories, land rights, and gender.

Maksuda Khanam
PhD candidate, ANU

Maksuda Khanam is a PhD candidate at the School of Archaeology and Anthropology, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences. Her research explores how the biomedicalization of childbirth in Bangladesh disproportionately impacts middle-class women. Prior to beginning her PhD, she was a faculty member in the Department of Anthropology at Jagannath University, Dhaka. She holds a master's degree in development studies from the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam, funded by the Netherlands Fellowship Programme (NFP).

Panel 2: Entangled Ecologies

Assa Doron
Professor, ANU

Assa Doron is a Professor of Anthropology and South Asia at the School of Culture, History & Language, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. His research explores the intersections of technology, health, and the environment in contemporary India. His latest book, co-authored with Alex Broom, *A World of Resistance: India and the Global Antibiotics Crisis*, will be published in early 2026.

Muhammad Kavesh
Associate Professor, ANU

Muhammad Kavesh is an Associate Professor at the School of Culture, History & Language, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific and the Director of the ANU South Asia Research Institute (SARI). His books include *Animal Enthusiasm* (2021); *Nurturing Alternative Futures* (2024, co-edited with Natasha Fijn); and *Spies and Other Pigeons* (2026).

V. Chitra
Lecturer, ANU

V. Chitra is a Lecturer at the School of Archaeology and Anthropology, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences. She is an anthropologist and a visual artist. Her research intersects environmental studies, science and technology studies, and the visual arts. She is the author of *Drawing Coastlines: Climate Anxieties and the Visual Reinvention of Mumbai's Shore* (Cornell University Press, 2024), a book that combines comics and text to illustrate how science, planning, and image-making intersect to shape environmental futures.

Hassan Virk
PhD candidate, ANU

Hassan Virk is a PhD candidate at the School Culture, History & Language, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. His research focuses on multispecies anthropology and multisensory ethnography, exploring how political and ecological violence implicate the entangled lives of human communities and more-than-human lifeworld at the edges of a military state and a religiously charged society.

Panel 3: Infrastructures of Revival

Mohammad Ibrahim Khalad
PhD candidate, ANU

Mohammad Ibrahim Khalad is a PhD candidate at the School of Archaeology and Anthropology, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences. His research focuses on understanding the perception of masculinity among Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Preeti Mudliar
Australia India Institute Fellow, University of Melbourne

Preeti Mudliar is a Maitri Fellow at the Australia India Institute, University of Melbourne. Her work is funded by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and administered by the Centre for Australia-India Relations. Her research follows the unfolding of tensions and frictions in India's public distribution system (PDS) that provides food security to citizens mediated by Aadhaar – India's digital ID system. She was also the inaugural 'Women in Tech' Fellow for 2024 awarded by the Australian Consulate Bengaluru and the Australia India Institute.

Nupur Joshi
Assistant Professor, Kalamazoo College

Nupur Joshi is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Sociology at Kalamazoo College. She is a human-environmental geographer with expertise in water security, informal urbanisation, and climate change impacts in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Nupur teaches courses related to international development, environmental justice, urbanisation in the Global South, and quantitative research methods. She is a research fellow at the Climate Institute at Ahmedabad University this semester studying climate change related heat stress on informal migrant labour.

Nadine Vanniasinkam
PhD candidate, ANU

Nadine Vanniasinkam is a PhD candidate at the School Culture, History & Language, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. Her doctoral research focuses on discourses and practices that shape coexistence and contestations around sacred sites in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. Her key research interests include ethno-religious relations, nationalism and minority identity politics with gender as a cross-cutting focus.

Plenary: Power, Borders, and Populism in India

Nalin Mehta
Managing Editor, Moneycontrol; Chief AI Officer, Network 18

Nalin Mehta is Managing Editor at Moneycontrol, Chief AI Officer at Network 18 and non-resident senior fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. He is an award-winning Indian journalist, political scientist and author who has held leadership positions in major Indian media companies and educational institutions; served as an international civil servant with the UN in Geneva, Switzerland; taught and held research positions at universities in Australia (La Trobe University), Singapore (NUS), Switzerland (International Olympic Museum) and India (Shiv Nadar University, IIM Bangalore). His books include The New BJP, India's Techade and Behind a Billion Screens.

Malini Sur
Associate Professor, Western Sydney University

Malini Sur is an Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of Higher Degree Research and Teaching at the Western Sydney University. She studies the mobility of people, goods, territories and everyday technologies within the context of global and climatic forces.

Priya Chacko
Associate Professor, University of Adelaide

Priya Chacko is an Associate Professor of International Politics at the University of Adelaide. Her research focuses on how nationalism facilitates, and is used to legitimise, domestic and

foreign policies; how the international (global capitalist processes, colonialism and imperialism, transnational knowledge production, geopolitics etc.) shapes domestic politics and political economy; and the structural role of ideology in capitalism.

Panel 1: Voices of Resistance

Hafeez A. Jamali

Director General, Balochistan Civil Services Academy, Pakistan

Hafeez Jamali is Director General at the Balochistan Civil Services Academy, Pakistan. He is a scholar and civil servant whose research focuses on the effects of globalisation and development on the livelihoods of marginalised communities. His research interests include anthropology of infrastructure, globalisation and trade, politics of identity, Indian Ocean cultures and the politics of identity and place in Balochistan, Pakistan.

Sahiba Maqbool

Lecturer, Monash University

Sahiba Maqbool is a Lecturer at Monash University and a casual academic at La Trobe University. Her research examines how international law was invoked by India to assert sovereignty over Kashmir. She was awarded her PhD by La Trobe University in February 2025 for a thesis that argues for the self-determination rights of the people of Kashmir by framing it as a case of incomplete decolonisation, drawing on the International Court of Justice's Advisory Opinions on the Chagos Archipelago.

Fazal Wahab

PhD candidate, ANU

Fazal Wahab is a PhD candidate at the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. His research explores intersections of critical theory, decolonial thoughts, and critical peace studies, with a focus on local epistemologies and their contribution to rethinking social and political life. He is particularly interested in how local and indigenous perspectives can broaden theoretical understandings within peace and social inquiry.

Asaf Lone

PhD candidate, ANU

Asaf Lone is a PhD candidate at the School of Regulation and Global Governance (RegNet), ANU College of Law, Governance and Policy. His research investigates how peacebuilding, transitional justice, the rule of law, and redress mechanisms intersect across different temporal nodes, territorial imaginations and spatialities in South Asia and beyond.

Panel 2: Making South Asia's Urban Future

Tanya Jakimow

Professor, ANU

Tanya Jakimow is a Professor at the School of Culture, History & Language, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. She is a former Australian Research Council Future Fellow, Discovery Early Career Research Fellow, and lead Chief Investigator of multi-institutional research projects. Tanya conducts research in India, Indonesia and Australia, with a focus on gender and politics and urban place-making.

Remeen Firoz
PhD candidate, ANU

Remeen Firoz is a PhD candidate at the School of Culture, History & Language, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. She is an environmental humanities scholar and has worked as an environmental practitioner for nearly two decades in Bangladesh. Her key interests are traditional environmental knowledge, natural resource governance, climate change, biodiversity conservation and Sundarban mangrove ecosystem.

Adam Sargent
Lecturer, ANU

Adam Sargent is a Lecturer at the School of Archaeology and Anthropology, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences. His work draws together semiotic and linguistic anthropology with studies of capitalism, labour, and social inequalities. He explores these topics through ethnographic projects in India on the politics of construction work and new forms of digital debt, as well as on engineering work in the U.S.

Ranu Kunwar
PhD candidate, ANU

Ranu Kunwar is a PhD candidate at the School Culture, History & Language, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. Her research seeks to understand informal urbanism in Siliguri by attending to everyday socio-spatial practices that enable street hawkers to forge social, spatial, and political claims on the markets and the city. Her research interests include informal labour, urban spatial productions, and Nepali identity politics in India.

Update Chairs

Kalpana Ram

Honorary Professor, ANU

Kalpana Ram is an Honorary Professor of Anthropology at ANU. Her research on the South Indian arts falls into two areas: the relationship between dance, music and nationalism as well as migration and gender in relation to dance. A much larger body of her work is based on research in fishing and agricultural Dalit groups in South India, addressing questions of the relationship between embodied experience and agency, particularly for women.

Sango Mahanty

Professor, ANU

Sango Mahanty is a Professor at the Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU College of Law, Governance and Policy. She is a human geographer and studies the politics of social and environmental change. She also researched the social dimensions of pollution, with a current project on how and why chemical use has escalated in Asian poultry farming and related challenges.

Annabel Dulhunty

Senior Lecturer, ANU

Annabel Dulhunty is a Senior Lecturer at the Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU College of Law, Governance and Policy. Her work addresses comparative overseas development assistance policies and programs, especially in regards to their impact on inequality and poverty. She also concentrates on women's empowerment and gender and development programming and has a particular research interest in climate adaptation and climate justice for the most vulnerable. Much of her work has focused on India and the South Asian region.

Sana Jaffrey

Research Fellow and Lecturer, ANU

Sana Jaffrey is a Research Fellow and Lecturer at the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific. She is a scholar of political violence and state-building in Asia.