

## International Geo-diversity Day 2022 Celebrations

### Geo-heritage Walks in Nilachal Hills, Guwahati, Assam

Organized by

**INTACH, Kamrup Chapter and Department of Archaeology, Cotton University**

On 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022

The INTACH, Kamrup Chapter and Department of Archaeology, Cotton University jointly organized a Geo-heritage walk on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at the Nilachal Hills in Guwahati (Assam) where the famous Kamakhya temple is located. The mighty river Brahmaputra flows on the northern side of the Nilachal Hills. The hill is a temple complex dedicated to the Dasa-Mahavidya or ten Mahavidyas. The Kamakhya temple is one of the most sacred Shakti Peethas which is well known for the Tantrik Shakti cult. The entire hill is dotted with many temples, and sites of archaeological and historical importance. Archaeological remains such as temple ruins, water tanks, stone architectural members, staircases, gates, inscriptions, sculptures, potsherds and metal objects are spread all over the hill. The Aadishakti Mata Kamakhya Devi Museum houses some extremely important archaeological objects. Some of the water-tanks or kundas of the Nilachal Hills are home to a variety of turtles, fishes and birds. The trees surrounding the temples and tanks also provide habitat to many seasonal birds. The turtle species include the Assam roofed turtle (*Pangshura sylhetensis*), locally known as Dura Kaso and rare freshwater softshell turtle. The rock-cut sculptures, Shivalingas, miniature sikhara shrines with curvilinear motifs, engravings and made on the exposed surfaces of granitic rocks in the hills are some of the major Geo-heritage attractions.

The Geo-heritage walk was attended by close to 50 participants comprising of students, faculties and heritage enthusiasts. The Walk started from the Siddheshwar temple at around 08.00 am where a brief introduction to the Geo-cultural significance of the Nilachal Hill was given by Dr. Manjil Hazarika, Convener, INTACH Kamrup Chapter and Head (i/c), Department of Archaeology, Cotton University with a welcome note. The historical background of the Kamakhya temple complex was provided by Dr. Ritika Sahu, Assistant Professor of the Department of Archaeology, Cotton University. The participants then visited the Kamakhya temple and observed the art, architecture and sculptural marvels along with the displays of the Aadishakti Mata Kamakhya Devi Museum. This was followed by the visit to the Archaeological Survey of India protected rock-cult sculpture of 'Dancing Bhairava' or 'Bala Bhairava' close to the Maa Bhairavi Temple and the Kaso Pukhuri where a large number of fish and turtles are present. Finally, the team started climbing down the Nilachal Hills through the western gateway where a good number of rock-cut images, rock-cut steps, stone gate and rock-engraved miniature sikhara shrines are found along the gateway. The Geo-heritage walk ended with a discussion on the need of these initiatives for creating public awareness and promoting research on these heritage sites.

