

Department of Anthropology, Sikkim University Celebrates World Anthropology Day 2026

The Department of Anthropology at Sikkim University marked World Anthropology Day 2026 with enthusiasm and intellectual fervour under the theme “*Celebrate. Engage. Inspire.*” The event brought together faculty members, scholars, and students in a vibrant reflection on the discipline’s scope and its deep relevance to contemporary society.



Special Badge made out of millet and rice grains

What is World Anthropology Day?

World Anthropology Day is a global initiative launched by the American Anthropological Association in 2015. Observed annually on the third Thursday of February, the day seeks to highlight anthropology’s contributions to understanding humanity in all its biological, cultural, linguistic, and archaeological diversity. Across universities and institutions worldwide, the occasion serves as an opportunity to showcase anthropological research, public engagement, and community-based initiatives that bridge academic knowledge and lived realities.

Tour of the Physical Laboratory

The celebration began with a tour of the Physical Anthropology Laboratory by the Dean of Social Sciences, Prof. Nawal Kishor Paswan guided by Ph.D Scholar Temsu. The laboratory, equipped with instruments such as an anthropometer rod, skinfold calipers, a hair colour chart, and curated displays of human skeletal remains, reflects the department's commitment to hands-on scientific training.



Scholar Temsu explaining the hair scale to Prof. Paswan along with faculty member Dr. James Haokip.

Open to visitors for the day, the lab offered BMI assessments, blood pressure measurements, blood group identification, and colour deficiency tests demonstrating anthropology's engagement with human biological variation and health. As early physical anthropologists like Franz Boas argued, the systematic study of human variation challenges racial typologies and affirms the unity of humankind through empirical inquiry.



Blood Pressure measurement



Prof. Paswan along with scholars touring the physical laboratory

Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum Visit



The programme continued with a guided tour of the Department's Archaeological and Ethnographic Museum. Carefully curated displays included stone tools, musical instruments, traditional household artefacts, and models of Bhutia and Lepcha houses. The exhibit offered a tangible narrative of material culture echoing Clifford Geertz's notion of culture as "webs of significance" spun through everyday practices and objects. The museum space illustrated how archaeology and ethnography together illuminate continuities between past lifeworlds and present identities.



Museum Tour by Prof. Paswan guided by scholars and students

Formal Address and Academic Reflections

In the formal session that followed, Prof. Paswan emphasized that anthropology must move beyond classroom celebration. He urged anthropologists to immerse themselves in villages and social networks, engaging directly with communities to truly “celebrate, engage, and inspire.” The Head of the Department, Prof. K. R. Rama Mohan, elaborated on anthropology’s holistic character spanning biological, social, cultural, and archaeological domains. Scholars and master’s students followed with reflections on how anthropology enables critical thinking about identity, development, environment, and everyday life. Their speeches highlighted the discipline’s continued relevance in a rapidly transforming world.

Ethnic Food Festival: Tasting embodied memory

The celebration culminated in an ethnic food festival organized by the department’s scholars and students, an embodied demonstration of food as culture. Anthropologists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss have long argued that cuisine operates as a symbolic system through which societies express structure, memory, and identity. In “Fermenting Modernity: Food and Politics in Northeast India.” In *The India Forum* (essay) by Dolly Kikon reflections on fermented foods, everyday culinary practices, and how food becomes a site of memory, identity, and political negotiation in Northeast India is made. She argues that indigenous food traditions are not merely dietary habits but are deeply entangled with questions of belonging, state regulation, ethnicity, and modernity.

Stalls featured indigenous and local foods. A particularly evocative stall consisted of buckwheat *roti*, millet *roti* and *pakor*s, *rayo ko saag*, yams, and chicken giblets prepared by PhD scholars Sushma Gurung, Samnim Lepcha, and Yogel Lepcha.



Food stall by Sushma Gurung, Samnim Lepcha, Yam (Simal Tarul) and Yogel Lepcha



Buckwheat (Phapar) roll (Khuri-ku) Millet Pakora Millet Roti

Another stall titled “The Memory Meal” presented a thoughtfully curated plate of *kinema* (fermented soybean), *kerala ko bungu ko achaar* (banana blossom preparation), *alu dum*, and *chamre bhaat* made from the special grain *anadhi ko dhan*, prepared by

scholar Ayushi Nirola. The meal was complemented by a fish *achaar* preparation by scholar Monila Limboo. Other stalls showcased *idli*, Assamese snacks, *phoochka*, and *jhaalmuri*, reflecting the culinary diversity of Northeast India and beyond. Through taste and texture, the event foregrounded memory, ecology, and community.



The Memory Meal stall



Idli and chutneys

A Celebration Beyond the Classroom

World Anthropology Day 2026 at Sikkim University thus became more than an academic observance, it was a public engagement with the discipline's living spirit. By integrating laboratory science, museum heritage, scholarly dialogue, and culinary

traditions, the department embodied anthropology's holistic vision which is to understand humanity in its biological diversity, cultural creativity, and social interconnectedness. In celebrating, engaging, and inspiring, the event reaffirmed anthropology's enduring commitment to understanding human experiences. The success of the programme would not have been possible without the constant guidance and support of all the faculty members, especially Dr. Charisma Lepcha, whose encouragement and coordination played a crucial role in bringing the celebration to fruition.