

# IIAS News and comment

## New interdisciplinary research project on biofuels

IIAS HAS BECOME PARTNER in a new network called JARAK. The Jatropa Research and Knowledge Network examines claims and facts regarding socially sustainable jatropa production in Indonesia.

Jatropa is crop with promise: it can be used as a clean non-fossil diesel fuel and it can provide new income sources in marginal areas that will grow the crop. Such promise has already inspired the investment of millions of dollars in jatropa plantations and plans for further investments have been announced in newspapers and at conferences. In only a few years, an ordinary hedge plant known in Indonesia as *jarak pagar*, has been transformed into a valuable commodity for energy production: jatropa. What is behind this rapid process of commoditisation? What are the environmental requirements and consequences? How can local producers and labourers benefit from the prospective profits?

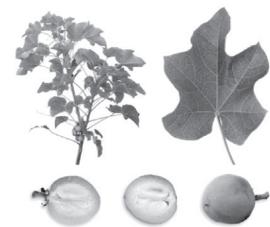
The scientific challenge of this network is to bridge the current gap between the claims on jatropa and the actual existing knowledge that would justify them.

Project leader Dr Jacqueline Vel of the Van Vollenhoven Institute for Law, Governance and Development (Leiden University) has been successful in bringing together the right partners and being awarded a large grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW).

Partners in this project are:  
-The Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV), Leiden, the Netherlands  
-The Institute of Cultural Anthropology, Leiden University, the Netherlands  
-The Plant Sciences Group of Wageningen University & Research (WUR), the Netherlands  
-Dept. of Anthropology, Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia  
-Dept. of Anthropology, Gadjah Madah University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
-Dept. of Agricultural Law, UNPAR Bandung, Indonesia  
-Dept. of Forestry, UNMUL Samarinda, Indonesia  
-Research Center for Natural Resources and Biotechnology, Bogor Agricultural University, Indonesia  
-International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), Leiden, the Netherlands

The KITLV and IIAS have each provided three fellowships for international researchers working on comparative perspectives regarding jatropa or other biofuels in Asia.

For information on IIAS fellowships please contact Manon Osseweijer, Deputy Director, [m.osseweijer@iias.nl](mailto:m.osseweijer@iias.nl)



*Nehru was no academic scholar. His was a beautiful mind with eclectic interests which he expressed in eloquent prose...*



Children's Day is one of the most eagerly awaited events in the Indian school calendar. Celebrated on 14th November, it commemorates the birthday of 'Chacha Nehru' (Uncle Nehru), as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was affectionately called by the children he loved so well. Nehru was not just one of the foremost leaders of the Indian national movement, and independent India's first Prime Minister – his seventeen uninterrupted years in office (from 1947 till his death in 1964) known as the 'Nehruvian era' – he was also incredibly fond of children. Many of the most popular images of the leader show him talking or listening attentively to children.

Rituparna Roy

APART FROM BEING A LEADER AND STATESMAN, Jawaharlal Nehru was also an author. It had never been his ambition to be a writer but his political vocation made him one. One of the inevitable consequences of his life as a freedom fighter was long spells of incarceration. He was jailed many times in the three decades of his active political life under the British. Added together, this amounted to nine years in prison. Difficult and uncertain though this life was, there were certain advantages to be found. Nehru turned his prison cell into a sanctuary, and used his enforced solitude to read, write and reflect on both his life and the world around him. Out of his protracted time in prison came *Glimpses of World History* (1934), *An Autobiography* (1936) and *The Discovery of India* (1945).

These books are deeply introspective, meditative and original works by a restless and agile mind. But the most important among them was perhaps *Discovery*, as it ushered in a new chapter in Indian historiography. In this book, Nehru re-interprets his country's past to create a modern secular nationalist discourse for the emerging independent state of India; and it was to mould the mind of an entire generation.

But perhaps the most delightful of his books was one for children – *Letters from a father to his daughter* (1929). As the title suggests, it was originally correspondence to his daughter Indira (or 'Indu', as he called her). Indira, of course, grew up in an intensely political atmosphere, which would eventually guide her into the same world as her father (and before him her grandfather) and see her become Prime Minister.

Nehru explains that he allowed the letters to be published because, 'friends, whose advice I value, have seen some virtue in them, and have suggested that I might place them before a wider audience.' The correspondence takes place, as Nehru tells us in the Foreword, 'in the summer of 1928 when she (Indira) was in the Himalayas at Mussorie and I was in the plains below'; a period when father and daughter were unable to vacation together. This was a common experience in the Nehru household, for aside from his prison sentences, Nehru was frequently away from Indira. He tried to fill his absences with words.

Nehru's letters are most unusual – an ingenious means of educating his daughter from a distance. In them, he talks about the origins of the world, its evolution, of the dawn of civilisation and of man's place in it. He introduces Indira to the mystery of difference in the human races, and discusses at length ideas of language, culture and much else besides. As Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi recalled almost half a century later: 'My father was interested in everything and delighted in sharing his enthusiasm.' The letters indeed bear the stamp of that enthusiasm, but they contain so much more. This book shares Nehru's sense of wonder in the diversity, richness and beauty of this world, while simultaneously trying to inculcate in his young readers a scientific, liberal world-view, one that emphasised the oneness and universality of humanity. As he states in the 'Foreword', 'I hope that such of them as read these letters may gradually begin to think of this world of ours as a large family of nations.'

Nehru was no academic scholar. His was a beautiful mind with eclectic interests which he expressed in eloquent prose – whether as public orator or as an author. He was very widely read and open to influences, both past and present, foreign and Indian. Foremost among the modern Indian thinkers who shaped his mind were Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore; but there were others too, among his own contemporaries, whom he greatly admired. And as independent India's first Prime Minister, he tried to gather round him luminaries he admired from various fields to assist him in the task of nation-building.

India's great leaders are usually remembered in two ways – they either have a street named after them, or have a national or state holiday in their honour (which very often turn into little more than annual opportunities to relax or have fun). By being institutionalised within the school system, however, Nehru's birthday has been spared the meaningless rituals that most others have.

Every 14th November, school-children in India are unfailingly reminded of whose birthday they are celebrating and why. Most schools have cultural programmes for the day, often with the students in charge. Across the country, various cultural, social, and even corporate, institutions conduct competitions for children. Children's Day is a day for children to engage in fun. Teachers often perform songs and dances for their students. Children are also treated to a film and lunch. In recent years, television networks have scheduled special childrens' programmes all day long on November 14, making this day a special treat.

But perhaps the best way to celebrate Children's Day would be to introduce children (in simple and innovative ways) to the writings of the leader. That way, instead of being just an annual 'event', this day could inspire adults to reach out to the young and rouse their children to become better citizens of their country, possessing virtues which their 'Chacha' endorsed.

Rituparna Roy  
IIAS Fellow

## Multiculturalism, religion and legal status in the Dutch colonial world, 1600-1960

The Hague, 21-23 January 2009

THE INSTITUTE FOR NETHERLANDS HISTORY (ING) and the Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV) jointly organised this symposium, the theme of which touches upon current research in both institutes. In the case of ING it concerns the programme 'The Dutch and Cultures across the Borders' and in KITLV the project 'A History of Twentieth Century Suriname'. This symposium provided a rare opportunity for specialists in the history of both the Dutch 'West' and 'East' Indies to come together. On this occasion, the conveners were Gerrit Knaap, Rosemarijn Hoefte and Henk Schulte Nordholt, assisted by Kirsten Hulsker. The symposium was sponsored by IIAS. The session open to the interested general public (which took place on January 21 in the auditorium of Koninklijke Bibliotheek [Royal Library]) was attended by approximately 150 people. The sessions on the other two days were attended by specialist scholars originating from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds including historians, cultural anthropologists and theologians specialised in mission history.

Three keynote speeches were presented at the public session: Professor Barbara Watson Andaya (University of Hawaii) talked about *Being Christian in Southeast Asia: Change and Continuity*. In doing so, she set the tone for the religious change aspect of the symposium. It appears that Christianity was, with the exception of the Philippines and Timor Leste, largely a 'minority religion'. Within Christianity in Southeast Asia 'localisation processes' were going on, meaning that mainstream Christianity from Europe was re-interpreted and adapted to local circumstances. Such localisation was often opposed by the official churches, and only gained momentum after independence. In *Education, marriage and apartheid in early 20th-century Suriname: The Indianization of the West*, Rosemarijn Hoefte (KITLV) drew an initial parallel between modes of managing multicultural society in the Dutch West and East Indies. This was done by focussing on the failed plans of Governor J.C. Kielstra. In the 1930s, Kielstra – intent on keeping different groups apart – attempted to transplant the East Indies' model of plural society to Suriname. This was contrary to developments in Suriname itself, where Dutch education had already achieved a certain degree of 'integration'. Gerrit Knaap's (ING) presentation *Airan and Verzuiling: Pillarisation and plural society in Indonesia* focused on the 'verzuilde' (pillarised, colonised) character of Indonesian society during the 1950s and questioned whether this was a 'legacy' of the Dutch

colonial past. Those groups which formed part of the 1950s political constellation of Indonesia appeared to have predecessors in the pre-independence, colonial stage. However, on closer examination, pillarisation was actually the result of autonomous developments in Indonesian society. The role of Dutchmen in this process was limited.

The closed sessions saw a total of 12 papers and five bullet presentations, the last mainly being outlines of ongoing research. Among the papers there were five, which focussed on the Christian missionary effort. Topics ranged from Suriname to Papua and issues included the challenges of particular mission fields, as well as the implications of conversion to another religion on other aspects of cultural life, and cultural change in a broader sense. Conversion was often the result of a collective choice. It was usually the conversion of a whole group, a clan or a village that made the difference. This in turn led to new identities making certain islands or ethnicities conspicuously different from their neighbours, which in the case of Indonesia were mostly Muslim. Muslims were not only found in the East Indies. After the abolition of slavery in 1863, migrants from Asia, British India and from Java, also found their way to Suriname. Consequently, the multi-ethnic and multi-religious fabric of this part of the West Indies became rather complicated. The Dutch authorities were rather slow to formulate a policy to deal with Muslims and Hindus in Suriname.

The discussion in the closed sessions was broad. Some impressions: It was established that the Dutch colonial government apparatus, whether it was manned by administrators of a Christian or a more secularised character, was generally rather 'islamophobe'. This mentality meant that attempts to expand Christianity could count on the sympathy of the colonial government, provided 'rust en orde' (tranquility and order) were guaranteed. In some places this expansion caused new divisions and 'sub-cultures' in society. Within the framework of a policy of 'verdeel-en-heers' (divide-and-rule), (multi)cultural diversity was maintained, promoted and juridically preserved. The colonial government and its associates placed the cultural or religious groups into a 'hierarchically' structured system elaborating on scales or degrees of 'civilisation', 'development' and 'modernity'. Formal discrimination and segregation based on colour went hand-in-hand with such a policy. Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries usually fell into line with such thoughts, with only a few realising that such patterns of thinking should be broken – that the future was not with subjugation but with emancipation and equality for the law of the vast non-European population of the colonies.

Most of the papers will be re-worked into articles, which will be published in scholarly journals.

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## Better searching on www.iias.nl

OUR GOAL is that the IIAS website provides you with good quality, relevant information which you can find quickly and easily. And so we've radically improved the search functionality on the site (<http://www.iias.nl/search>). It's revolutionary and our web manager, Thomas Voorter, explains how:

The old search function listed results based on the frequency of a certain keyword in a web page document and how often the page had been viewed. This 'best-first search' forces you to guess in advance what might be available, and often leaves you with no search results at all. For example, when you search for 'ethnicity' generally, you want to bring up documents about *ethnicity*, rather than just those which mention the word frequently but could be about another subject.

The new search function looks at this 'aboutness' (in librarian lingo) and reacts accordingly. Now, all our Newsletter articles, fellow profile pages, events and research projects have been enriched with metadata tags, containing multiple classifications – giving an idea of what the document is 'about'.

To facilitate this, we've installed the open source Apache Solr search engine. It permanently indexes information on our web server and enables faceted search to give you more guidance. This allows you to engage interactively with your search results – by browsing through different classification schemes and filter facets such as content types, regions, article categories, and author. You can start with a broad and general search query and narrow down the number of documents, by adding facets

to the *current search* box. If you are not satisfied with the outcome you can delete some facets and add others to change your direction.

Other great Solr features are 'hit highlighting' and an inbuilt 'Did you mean...' spell checker providing you with suggestions in case of misspellings. It can also find other variants of a word and present them highlighted in the search results. For example, while searching for *ethnic* the search server also throws up *ethnicity*, *ethnicities*, *ethnical*, *ethnically*. You can save your search session as a RSS feed and load it into your favourite reader, which will notify you of new content matching your query.

Last but not least, electronic documents like PDF and MS Word files are fully indexed. This is particularly useful if you want to search through all the Newsletter issues, which are stored in our repository as PDFs. Whereas previously, the Newsletter articles were somewhat hidden in the layers of our site, now they can be effectively retrieved using the new intuitive search box on [www.iias.nl](http://www.iias.nl). As ever, your comments and feedback on the site are welcome.

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## CALL FOR PAPERS

The Department of Southeast Asian Studies, Goethe-University Frankfurt, Germany; the School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia; and the Department of Malay Studies, National University of Singapore invite interested scholars to participate in the following jointly organised International Seminar:

## Trade and Finance in the Malay World: Historical and Cultural Perspectives

DATE AND VENUE: University of Frankfurt, Germany, 17-18 June 2010  
DEADLINE: Paper title and abstract: 31 Oct. 2009; full paper: 30 April 2010

No conference fee for paper presenters. Presenters are expected to find their own funding for travel and hotel costs.

ON THE TOPIC OF THE SEMINAR:

One of the major impacts of the colonial era in insular Southeast Asia was the (partial) replacement of indigenous trading classes by foreign and migrant merchants. The cultural consequences for the historical construction of 'Malay identity' were considerable, influencing discourses in the post-colonial Malay world to the present day. This international seminar aims at discussing both the historical evidence of the replacement process as well as its discursive representation in both historical and contemporary discourses. Contributions from a multitude of disciplinary perspectives are therefore highly welcome. Conference languages: English and Malay. The organisers plan for a conference publication in English aimed toward a broader international audience. If enough Malaylanguage contributions are presented, a separate Malay-language publication might be possible.

CONVENORS:

Prof. Dr. Arndt Graf, Department of Southeast Asian Studies, Goethe-University Frankfurt, ([arndtgraf@yahoo.de](mailto:arndtgraf@yahoo.de))  
Prof. Dato' Dr. Abu Talib Ahmad, Dean, School of Humanities, Universiti Sains Malaysia ([atalib@usm.my](mailto:atalib@usm.my))  
Assoc.Prof. Dr. Farid Alatas, Department of Malay Studies, National University of Singapore ([alatas@nus.edu.sg](mailto:alatas@nus.edu.sg))

PLEASE SEND YOUR PAPER TITLE AND ABSTRACT TO:

Secretariat of the international seminar, Trade and Finance in the Malay World  
c/o Prof. Dr. Arndt Graf, Dept. of Southeast Asian Studies  
Goethe-University Frankfurt, Senckenberganlage 31, 60325 Frankfurt

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The convenors would be very pleased if you could pass on this Call for Papers to other scholars who might also be interested to participate. Thank you!



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## IIAS World Expo workshop

IIAS HAS PLANS FOR A WORKSHOP tentatively entitled *Asian Countries as Exhibited at World Expositions: Revisited in a Global Historical Perspective*. Emphasis will be given to issues regarding how the coloniser (the 'West') and the colonised (the 'East') (mis)represented and intermingled with one other at expositions held between the late 19th century and the early 20th century. We particularly welcome comparative and interdisciplinary case studies of individual Asian countries including China, India, Indonesia Japan, and Korea which disclose how they competed and struggled with each other in the pursuit of modernisation.

The workshop will take place on 25 June 2010 in Leiden, the Netherlands. If you are interested participating in the workshop, and/or have any suggestions to make, please contact:

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