ABSTRACT  It is now widely recognized that the Partition of India was not just an event that happened in August 1947 – it had a long afterlife. And in exploring that aftermath of Partition, many voices have been recovered, yet many still remain silent. The Partition had unleashed unimaginable violence and triggered perhaps the greatest exodus of people in human history. Among those refugees were nearly two million Dalit or low-caste Hindu peasants who fled from East Pakistan to West Bengal between 1947 and 1964. As Partition historiography focuses almost exclusively on the Hindus and Sikhs on the one hand and the Muslims on the other, until now these low caste peasant refugees have remained almost totally excluded from the narratives of Partition. This paper is a work-in-progress report on a project that by using oral history methods and archival research seeks to restore the voices of the Dalit in the history of Partition in eastern India.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER  Sekhar Bandyopadhyay is Director of New Zealand India Research Institute at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. His primary research interest is in nationalism and the question of caste in colonial and postcolonial India. Some of his recent books are Caste, Culture and Hegemony: Social Dominance in Colonial Bengal (Sage, 2004), Decolonization in South Asia: Meanings of Freedom in Post-independence West Bengal (Routledge, 2009), Caste, Protest and Identity in Colonial India: The Namasudras of Bengal, 1872-1947 (Second edition, OUP, 2011) and From Plassey to Partition and After (Orient BlackSwan 2015). Along with Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury, he is currently engaged in a research project on ‘Dalits in the history of Partition in eastern India’.

DATE  Monday, 19 October 2015
TIME  3.00pm to 4.30pm
VENUE  ISAS Board Room, 29 Heng Mui Keng Terrace, #09-06, Block B, Singapore 119620
CHAIRPERSON  A/P Gyanesh Kudaisya