

## **SIPG–North South University colloquium stressed the need for a dynamic policy to address the fast-changing landscape in Rakhine**

**Dhaka, 27 February 2025:** The South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) at North South University (NSU) organized a colloquium titled “Situation in Rakhine and Implications for Bangladesh.” The event brought together leading scholars, policymakers, and diplomats to deliberate on the evolving crisis in Myanmar’s Rakhine State, its direct and indirect effects on Bangladesh, and potential strategies for sustainable regional engagement.

Held at the Syndicate Hall of North South University, the colloquium provided a timely forum to analyze the rising influence of the Arakan Army (AA) as the de facto authority in Rakhine, the prolonged Rohingya crisis, and the strategic importance of Bangladesh’s Chittagong region in fostering economic stability of Rakhine. With Myanmar’s internal conflicts continuing to shape the region's geopolitical landscape, the discussions sought to generate concrete recommendations for policymakers as they navigate the complex realities of regional diplomacy, economic integration, and security challenges.



During the deliberations, speakers underscored that Myanmar’s internal conflicts have long shaped regional dynamics. Dr Khalilur Rahman, High Representative of the Chief Adviser on the Interim Government of Bangladesh for the Rohingya Issue and Priority Matters, said Bangladesh must respond with a balanced approach. “While humanitarian concerns remain at the forefront,” he noted, “the Arakan Army must respect international humanitarian laws and international human rights law. To ensure stability along our southeastern border, we must maintain an open dialogue with all stakeholders, including the Arakan Army.” Similarly, Lt. Gen Abdul Hafiz, Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser on Defence and National Solidarity Development, noted that Myanmar’s internal unrest has historically posed security risks for Bangladesh. He noted the Arakan

Army as a dominating force in most of Rakhine State, thus heightening threats of cross-border attacks, arms smuggling, drugs, human trafficking, and further Rohingya displacement. Stressing that “diplomacy, backed by strategic deterrence based on a national consensus, is critical to protecting our national interests,” he underscored Bangladesh’s priority of ensuring safe, dignified, and voluntary Rohingya repatriation.



Keynote speaker Ambassador Md. Sufiur Rahman, Senior Research Fellow at SIPG, provided an analytical overview of the shifting political landscape in Rakhine. He highlighted that 750,000 people have been displaced from Rakhine and that poverty in Rakhine has ascended to alarming levels. He believes Bangladesh can play a pivotal stabilizing role by providing humanitarian support and strengthening economic ties between Chittagong and Rakhine. “Economic linkages can serve as a pathway to broader cooperation and peace-building,” he remarked. He advised leveraging this to secure a peaceful border and a friendly neighbor. Brig Gen (Retd) Hasan Md Shamsuddin from the Center for Bangladesh and Global Affairs (CBGA) drew attention to the Arakan Army’s ongoing military and strategic expansion, which has compelled Rohingya communities to leave. He voiced concern about escalating militarisation, arms smuggling, and the heightened risk of border instability for Bangladesh. Professor Sk Tawfique M Haque, Director of SIPG, urged a pragmatic policy toward the Arakan Army by recognizing the fast-evolving situation in Rakhine and stopping the slow and silent influx of Rohingya Refugees since October 2023. He observed that Bangladesh should balance security concerns with economic and diplomatic goals.



Humanitarian issues remained a central theme throughout the colloquium. Nurul Islam, Chair of the Arakan Rohingya National Alliance (ARNA), said the Rohingya have faced decades of systemic persecution, now intensified by the Arakan Army's actions. He insisted that any repatriation must include political assurances of safety and citizenship rights, calling on the international community to pressure the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Army. Human rights activist Sahat Zia Hero lamented the lack of effective outcomes from diplomatic efforts so far, noting that tangible progress for the displaced Rohingya population remains elusive.







The role of the National Unity Government (NUG) in mitigating the crisis was also discussed in the second session of the program which was moderated by Dr. Ishrat Zakia Sultana, Assistant Professor of The Department of Political Science and Sociology (PSS), NSU. U Aung Kyaw Moe, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Human Rights under the NUG, applauded Bangladesh's continued support for the Rohingya community and underscored the need to incorporate Rohingya concerns into Myanmar's broader democratic movement. He advocated for increased global pressure on both the military junta and the Arakan Army to cease human rights violations and displacement.



In closing, Prof. Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of North South University, thanked SIPG, the keynote presenter, the speakers, panelists, and attendees for their insightful contributions. He reaffirmed North South University's commitment to advancing dialogues on critical regional issues and ensuring academic research informs policy development. He stated, "Together, we can build bridges of understanding and forge a more peaceful tomorrow for everyone."



**The End**