

CSCSS International Conference: "China - South Asia: Civilization and Connectivity: History and Contemporary Issues" Wraps Up at North South University

Dhaka, 27-28 December 2024: The International Conference on "China - South Asia: Civilization and Connectivity: History and Contemporary Issues," jointly organized by the China–South Asia Center for Sociocultural Studies (CSCSS) of the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) at North South University (NSU), Bangladesh, and Yunnan University, China, commenced with an inspiring inauguration ceremony at North South University.

The event was graced by distinguished guests, **Mr Md. Touhid Hossain**, Adviser for Foreign Affairs of the Interim Government of Bangladesh, as the Chief Guest, and His Excellency **Mr Yao Wen**, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to Bangladesh, as the Guest of Honor. **Professor Abdul Hannan Chowdhury**, the Vice Chancellor of NSU, graced the occasion as session chair.



The ceremony began with a warm welcome speech by **Professor Sk. Tawfique M. Haque**, Director of SIPG and CSCSS, followed by remarks from **Professor Mohammed Nuruzzaman**, Conference Convener, North South University. Special guests **Professor He Ming** from Yunnan University, **Mr Han Kun**, Deputy Country Manager of PowerChina, and **Mr Zhao Shibo**, Vice President of the Overseas Chinese Association in Bangladesh, highlighted the importance of fostering deeper socio-cultural and academic collaboration between China and South Asia. **Dr Harisur Rahman**,

Coordinator of CSCSS at North South University, delivered the vote of thanks during the inaugural session, expressing gratitude to the distinguished guests and participants.



His Excellency Mr. Yao Wen emphasized the Chinese Embassy's readiness to collaborate with Bangladeshi scholars to develop enhanced academic programs and foster intellectual exchange. This collaboration, aimed at promoting regional prosperity, represents a shared vision of mutual learning, progress, and civilizational interactions that will strengthen Sino-Bangladeshi academic ties and contribute to a brighter future for the region.



Mr Md Touhid Hossain, the Advisor for Foreign Affairs, emphasized the deep historical and cultural ties between China and South Asia. He highlighted the importance of regional connectivity in addressing contemporary challenges. Bangladesh, as a partner in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), seeks seamless connectivity, particularly through a peaceful and stable Myanmar. This would enhance economic growth, reduce poverty, and facilitate cultural exchanges. While celebrating historical ties, Mr Hossain called for collective action to tackle climate change, geopolitical tensions, and economic disparities.





Professor Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, the Vice Chancellor of North South University, emphasised the collaboration extends to research, cultural exchanges, and joint projects, with numerous Bangladeshi students pursuing advanced studies in China. Professor Chowdhury highlighted the historical relationship between Yunnan University and North South University, which started with the establishing of the first Confucius Institute in the region at NSU. Additionally, partnerships with Chinese companies in sectors such as energy and infrastructure were acknowledged as vital to Bangladesh's development.





The second day of the **International Conference on "China - South Asia: Civilization and Connectivity: History and Contemporary Issues,"** jointly organized by the **China–South Asia Center for Sociocultural Studies (CSCSS)** of the **South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG)** at North South University (NSU), Bangladesh, and **Yunnan University, China**, concluded successfully with rich discussions across key themes addressing historical, cultural, geopolitical, and socio-economic aspects of the region. The second day featured thematic sessions focusing on Political and Diplomatic Dynamics, Media and Communication, Economic and Trade Connections, AI and Cyber Diplomacy, and Health and Medicine, fostering robust dialogue and insights on regional challenges and opportunities.





Discussions on the Rohingya crisis, security dilemma, and counterterrorism centered on the humanitarian and security challenges posed by the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. Md. Mahbubur Rahman analyzed the socio-political impacts of the refugee influx, while Md. Rashidul Islam Rusel emphasized the need for ethical frameworks to address these challenges. Dr. Shabana Fayyaz explored integrating counterterrorism strategies with economic development to protect Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects. The Public Perceptions and Bilateral Relations sessions highlighted the role of media narratives and public sentiment in shaping regional relations. Presentations by Akram Hossain, and Syed Shahnawaz Mohsin underscored the need for ethical journalism, improved media literacy, and cultural diplomacy to foster stronger ties among South Asian nations. Discussions explored the strategic significance of the Indo-Pacific and Bay of Bengal regions amidst growing geopolitical rivalries. Imtiaz A. Hussain and David Jiang analyzed the interplay between economic initiatives like BRI and security concerns, emphasizing the need for regional cooperation and stability. Participants examined how the Belt and Road Initiative could strengthen cultural ties and promote mutual understanding. Presentations emphasized leveraging historical legacies for modern connectivity and aligning BRI goals with local priorities to ensure sustainable development.

The conference reaffirmed the importance of shared histories, such as the Silk Road, in fostering modern initiatives like the BRI. Ethical journalism and cultural diplomacy were highlighted as critical tools to bridge gaps and improve bilateral relations in South Asia. Discussions emphasized balancing economic growth with security strategies to foster stability among South Asian nations. The Rohingya crisis emerged as a critical issue requiring multilateral cooperation and sustainable solutions. Aligning BRI projects with local needs and sustainable development goals was recommended to enhance regional progress.



The concluding session, chaired by **Prof. Abdur Rob Khan**, Treasurer and Pro Vice-Chancellor of NSU, featured a summary of key outcomes by **Prof. Mohammed Nuruzzaman**. **Mr. Li Shaopeng**, Cultural Counsellor of the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka, emphasized the value of academic collaborations in fostering regional prosperity and connectivity.



The two-day event hosted over 125 participants, including scholars, policymakers, and international experts, reflecting North South University's commitment to fostering academic dialogue and regional cooperation. The conference underscored the importance of building bridges between China and South Asia to address shared challenges and opportunities.

