

Colloquium on Impacts of “BURMA Act” on Bangladesh -Myanmar Bordering Region

It has been two years since the military coup in Myanmar, and there is no peace in sight. Late last December, the United States passed the BURMA Act, a comprehensive law designed to simultaneously sanction Myanmar’s military junta while providing support to the country’s numerous democratic forces.

In view of these changes, the Center for Peace Studies (CPS) of the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) at North South University held a colloquium on **Impacts of “BURMA Act” on Bangladesh-Myanmar Bordering Region** on February 22, 2023, at 11:00AM in the Syndicate Hall.

Moderated by Dr. Sk. Tawfique M. Haque, Director of SIPG, the seminar was addressed by SIPG Senior Fellow and former Election Commissioner Brig. Gen. (retd) Dr. M. Sakhawat Hussain, Prof. Dr. Zaw Wai Soe, Minister of Health and Education, National Unity Government (NUG) of Myanmar, Ms Thitsar representative of Foreign Ministry of NUG, H.E. Sufiur Rahman, Bangladesh’s ambassador to Switzerland and the permanent representative to the U.N., Ambassador Shahidul Haque, Professor at SIPG, and Dr. Raymond Kwun-Sun Lau, Assistant professor at the Department of Political Science and Sociology of NSU.



Brig. Gen. M. Sakhawat Hussain, PhD, (retd), noted that using a liberal interpretation of the non-lethal assistance clause may allow the United States to provide military support to the various Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAO) in Myanmar, which may undermine Bangladesh's security as these groups have some ties to the same separatist factions operating in our country.

Professor Zaw Wai Soe, Minister of Health and Education, NUG of Myanmar expressed gratitude for the passing of the BURMA Act and for U.S. support, but reiterated that it does not rely on any one single superpower, but rather believes in a multilateral response to be the ideal way to address the current conflict. NUG officially recognizes the Rohingya as an ethnic group of Myanmar and is in favor of peaceful and full repatriation of Rohingya from Bangladesh to Myanmar.

Ambassador H. E. Mr. Mohammad Sufiur Rahman, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Switzerland highlighted the emergence of the Arakan Army as a key player in the conflict and emphasized how reaching a resolution on the Rohingya issue between Bangladesh and Myanmar cannot be achieved without taking the Arakan Army's interests into account.

Professor Shahidul Haque, SIPG, NSU discussed ASEAN's role in the conflict and pointed to its repeated shortcomings in addressing the conflict in Myanmar, drawing particular attention to its negligence in understanding the plight of the numerous ethnic minorities in the country.

Dr. Raymond Kwun-Sun Lau, underscored the geopolitical and strategic importance of the Rakhine State to regional powers such as India and China, both for its vast reserves of hydrocarbons as well as its location as a key area for connectivity projects that links India to its northeast region and reinforces China's Belt-and-Road Initiative (BRI) respectively.

The event was also attended by experts and practitioners of geopolitics, representatives from international agencies, government officials, researchers, journalists, faculty members and students of NSU.