SIPG of NSU Convenes High-Level Policy Dialogue on Dhaka River Restoration

On 22nd September 2025 the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG), NSU, in collaboration with the H&H (Hussain & Hussain) Foundation, organized a high-level Policy Dialogue on "Reviving Dhaka's Rivers: Policy Options for Sustainable Management" at Syndicate Hall, NSU, supported by BIWTA, Dhaka North City Corporation, Berky, Daiki Axis, and CSD Academy.

Encircled by the Buriganga, Turag, Shitalakkhya, Dhaleshwari, and Balu rivers, Dhaka faces severe pollution from industrial effluents, municipal waste, urban runoff, encroachment, and wetland loss. The dialogue brought together policymakers, academics, industry experts, and civil society to develop actionable strategies for river restoration.

Guest of Honour Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Advisor to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Water Resources, GoB, emphasized the city's lack of nature-centric priorities. She cited ecological damage from projects like the Chittagong–Cox's Bazar railway and highlighted the Ganges as an example of a successful holistic approach. "Safeguarding Dhaka's rivers requires a holistic, nature-centric approach—quick fixes will not prevent irreversible ecological damage," she noted.

Special guest Mr. Mohammad Azaz, Administrator of Dhaka North City Corporation, highlighted the successful restoration of two dead rivers and called for a water-source approach, stressing that biodiversity must be prioritized to build a smart and sustainable Dhaka.

Dr. Abdus Samad, Associate Professor at Jagannath University and Adjunct Faculty at NSU, delivered the keynote, presenting research on heavy metal pollution and policy recommendations for sustainable river management. He revealed that Dhaka's rivers, particularly the Buriganga and Shitalakshya, are severely contaminated with heavy metals from untreated industrial waste and

weak regulations. His solutions include establishing a River Protection Authority and using economic incentives to encourage cleaner practices.

Prof. Md. Jakariya, Director of the Climate Change & Disaster Resilience Center, NSU, stressed that river pollution has long-term impacts, requiring integrated policy, behavioral change, and community engagement to prevent irreversible damage. Prof. Dr. Anupam Hossain, Public Health and Communication Specialist, highlighted the dangers of river pollution and the need for cross-disciplinary collaboration, emphasizing practical, cost-effective solutions involving doctors, engineers, researchers, and policymakers.

Prof. Dr. Mohammed Julfiker Ali, Consultant at H&H Foundation, noted that despite knowing pollution sources, gaps in enforcement and policymaking stall action. Commodore Arif Ahmed Mostafa, Chairman of BIWTA, Ministry of Shipping, emphasized identifying river system impediments and implementing sustainable management, including solid waste control.

Mr. Rui Owase, Managing Director of Daiki Axis – Bangladesh Ltd., highlighted that most river pollution stems from untreated sewage and stressed that solutions must be smart, automated, sustainable, and applied at the source. Mr. Martin Alkemeier, Managing Director of Berky Asia Pte. Ltd., encouraged taking action rather than waiting for perfection, noting that continuous improvement is more effective than delay.

The session chair, Prof. Abdul Hannan Chowdhury, Vice Chancellor of NSU, stressed that while waste management is often discussed, efforts must target pollution at its source. He highlighted SIPG's policy brief as a roadmap for practical strategies and expressed hope for a more sustainable and vibrant Dhaka. The program opened with a welcome speech by M. Shafaq Hussain, President and Executive Director of H&H Foundation, and was moderated by Prof. Sk Tawfique M. Haque, Director of SIPG, NSU.

The dialogue concluded with a call for coordinated action among policymakers, industries, researchers, and citizens to protect Dhaka's rivers, improve public health, safeguard livelihoods, and ensure a resilient urban ecosystem.


POLICY DIALOGUE
Reviving Dhaka's Rivers: Policy Op
for Sustainable Management
Venue: Syndicate Hall, NSU
22nd September 2025 | Time: 11 AM to 1 PM