

## **Will Myanmar's recent military coup affect the Rohingya issue?**

The Center for Peace Studies (CPS) under the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) of North South University has organized a webinar to discuss the impacts of a military coup in Myanmar on the Rohingya crisis. Brigadier General (Rtd.) M Sakhawat Hossain, Senior Fellow of SIPG, Ambassador Shahidul Haque, Professorial fellow of SIPG, Professor Lailufar Yasmin of Dhaka University, and faculty of Sultan Joynal Abedin University from Malaysia, Dr. Mahbubul Haque joined the webinar as panelists.

The issue of Rohingyas being stateless and seeking refuge in Bangladesh, for more than four decades, has drawn global attention in 2016-2017 when more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar fled to Bangladesh to escape genocide. The webinar provided feedback on the military rule of various ethnic groups living in Myanmar, including the Rohingya community living in Bangladesh and Malaysia. In addition, the geopolitical context, its impacts on Bangladesh-Myanmar bilateral relations, and the lack of a strong role in the Western world also came up.

Speaking on the state of democracy in Myanmar, Professor Lailufar Yasmin said that the fight for democracy is not actually for democracy because the military rule is constitutionally sanctioned. SIPG senior fellow Dr. Sakhawat Hossain pointed out the impacts of Myanmar's military rule on the Rohingya crisis mentioning that the country's State Counselor had never had good relations with Myanmar in the past. Disagreeing with the remarks, Ambassador Shahidul Haque noted that since the country's State Counselor was born and raised in a military family, she had always had good relations with the military. He added that there was little difference between her views on the Rohingya and the current military junta in Myanmar. Rather there is a planned plot behind the current military coup, which has not yet been revealed.

Dr. Mahbubul Haque from Malaysia focused on the regional political dynamics. He thinks that ASEAN is silent on the issue because of its non-interference policy, which is unfortunate. After the military coup in Myanmar, there has not been much official protest in other Southeast Asian countries. Common people of those countries, however, demonstrated some protests. He also highlighted our limited knowledge about Myanmar, which serves as an obstacle to resolving the Rohingya issue. NSU Professorial Fellow Ambassador Shahidul Haque emphasized the need to strengthen the process of justice for the Rohingya genocide in the ICJ. He also stressed that Bangladesh's strategy should be adopted by understanding this situation.

Dr. Ishrat Zakia Sultana, CPS Coordinator, moderated the session while NSU's Confucius Institute director Dr. Bulbul Siddiqui gave the welcome speech. Among others, Professor Sk. Tawfique

Haque, Director of SIPG and CPS, faculties, researchers, and representatives of international organizations also joined the webinar. CPS has been working on peace research and advocacy activities since 2019.