



**Seminar on**

# **The Rohingya Crisis: Contemporary Security Dimensions and Future of Repatriation Process**

**Wednesday, 15 November 2023**

**Organised by**  
**Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)**





**Seminar on**  
**The Rohingya Crisis:**  
**Contemporary Security**  
**Dimensions and Future of**  
**Repatriation Process**



**Publications Officer**

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)  
1/46, Old Elephant Road (West of Ramna Police Station)  
Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.  
Phone: (880-2) PABX: 48315808, 22223808, Ext. 136  
Fax: (880-2) 48312625, e-mail: [po@biiss.org](mailto:po@biiss.org)  
Website: [www.biiss.org](http://www.biiss.org)

**Designed & Printed by**  
**nymphaea**

Hashim Tower, Suite 6C, 6th Floor  
205/1/A, Tejgaon–Gulshan Link Road, Dhaka 1208  
Phone: +88 02 22262032, +88 02 22262054  
E-mail: [info@nymphaea-bd.com](mailto:info@nymphaea-bd.com)  
Website: [www.nymphaea-bd.com](http://www.nymphaea-bd.com)



## SEMINAR ON

# The Rohingya Crisis: Contemporary Security Dimensions and Future of Repatriation Process

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) organised a seminar titled ‘The Rohingya Crisis: Contemporary Security Dimensions and Future of Repatriation Process’ on Wednesday, 15 November 2023 at the BIISS auditorium. H E Ambassador Masud Bin Momen, Foreign Secretary (Senior Secretary), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, graced the seminar as the Chief Guest. Ambassador A F M Gousal Azam Sarker, Chairman of BIISS, moderated the seminar as the session chair. The seminar started with the welcome address of the Director General of BIISS, Major General Sheikh Pasha Habib Uddin, OSP, SGP, BAMS, afwc, psc. Three presentations were delivered in the seminar. The first presentation was delivered by Md Jahan Shoieb, Research Fellow, BIISS on ‘The Rohingya Crisis: An Overview’. The second presentation was made by Major General (Retd) Md Nayeem Ashfaque Chowdhury, SBP, OSP, SUP, psc on ‘The Rohingya Crisis: Contemporary Security Dimensions’. The third presentation was delivered by Professor Imtiaz A Hussain, Department of Global Studies and Governance, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), on ‘Rohingya Crisis: Future of Repatriation Process’. These were followed by an open discussion session. Thereafter, the Chief Guest, Ambassador Masud Bin Momen, Foreign Secretary (Senior Secretary), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, delivered his valuable speech. Finally, the session chair, Ambassador A F M Gousal Azam Sarker, delivered the concluding remarks. Senior officials from different ministries, ambassadors, high commissioners, former diplomats, senior military officials, media, researchers, academics, and students from various universities, representatives from different think tanks, international organisations, participated in the seminar and enriched it by presenting their valuable opinions, comments, suggestions, and observations during the open discussion session.



## WELCOME ADDRESS



**Major General Sheikh Pasha Habib Uddin, OSP, SGP, BAMS, afwc, psc**

*Former Director General, Bangladesh Institute for International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)*

At the outset of his speech, the Director General of BIISS, paid his deepest homage to the memory of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and millions of martyrs who made their supreme sacrifice during the War of Liberation. He stated that in 2017, the world witnessed one of the largest forced migrations in the shortest possible time in human history as Myanmar orchestrated an unprecedented exodus of Rohingyas from its Rakhine State. The helpless Rohingyas faced the worst forms of violence owing to their religion and race, which was termed as the “textbook example of ethnic cleansing” by the United Nations. Consequently, as an immediate neighbour, Bangladesh had to bear the burden of hosting over 1.1 million forcibly displaced populations in its territory. This humanitarian crisis has undoubtedly posed a multifaceted challenge for Bangladesh and the entire region. To resolve the crisis for greater security and stability in the region; safe, secure, dignified, and sustainable repatriation is the only solution to this enduring humanitarian crisis. However, the Ukraine War and the Hamas-Israel conflict, great power competition in the Indo-Pacific region, and geopolitics in the Bay of Bengal are putting the Rohingya issue on the back burner. As global attention is declining, funds for international humanitarian support for the Rohingyas are also gradually receding. Consequently, the Rohingya crisis is putting enormous strain on Bangladesh’s economy amid the current global economic slowdown.

The Director General noted that the contemporary security dimensions of this protracted crisis have created numerous challenges not only within the borders of Bangladesh but for the whole region itself. The violence and displacement have caused immeasurable human suffering as well as created sources of instability and insecurity in this region. The situation in Myanmar has also significantly changed due to the Military Coup and the escalating civil war are affecting the repatriation process. Consequently, there is a growing apprehension that the desperation and frustration of the displaced population can potentially be exploited by radical groups. Rising transnational and cross-border crime is another major concern for regional security. In addition to a humanitarian

crisis, it is a security concern that demands a collective, comprehensive, and collaborative response.

The Director General said that Bangladesh continued its negotiations with Myanmar and is keen to engage regional and global stakeholders. Although Myanmar engages itself in repatriation negotiations, sustainable repatriation requires strong political will from the Myanmar authority. As evident from the comments of a member of a working group, repatriation is not very high on the agenda of Myanmar authorities, as they face numerous other challenges at home. The international community must actively engage Myanmar to facilitate the repatriation process. In addressing the ongoing Rohingya crisis, several pivotal issues must be considered for the repatriation. The first set of issues revolves around the immediate and necessary steps for repatriation, including security assurance and access to essential services. These aspects are fundamental for creating a conducive environment in which the Rohingya population can return safely and lead dignified lives. The second set of issues delves into the longer-term aspects of sustainability, emphasising the importance of access to livelihoods, education, food security, and a clear pathway to full citizenship.

In conclusion, the Director General reiterated that efforts are needed to address these issues comprehensively, as they are interlinked and essential for the successful reintegration of the Rohingya population in their own country. All must work together with international organisations and regional partners to navigate these challenges, ensuring the protection of rights and the well-being of the Rohingya population in their homeland.



### **Mr Md Jahan Shoieb**

*Research Fellow, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)*

Research Fellow Jahan Shoieb started his presentation by addressing the question of who the Rohingyas are. According to the UN Secretary General, the Rohingyas are one of the ethnic minorities of Myanmar and the most discriminated people in the world. They have faced humanitarian crises like war, genocide, and different types of torture. Even the Myanmar authorities sometimes deny addressing them as Rohingyas. As Bangladesh is also not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its additional protocol in 1967, Bangladesh also doesn't term them as refugees, so they are termed Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs). Mr Shoieb added that the first instance of Rohingya exodus to Bangladesh started from 1977 to 1978. However, the unprecedented incident occurred in 2017 when more than 700,000 Rohingyas entered Bangladesh after being uprooted from their homeland. So, the Rohingyas are split into different countries, including Bangladesh, Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Gambia, India, and the USA. Bangladesh currently hosts more than 1.2 million Rohingyas on its land, and every year they add up to 30,000 new babies.

Explaining the timelines, Mr Shoieb stated that in 1962, military rule became the norm in Myanmar. Subsequently, the Buddhists got the upper hand in that country, and the Muslims became like the second class population. In 1978, Myanmar junta rulers started the operation Nagamin Dragon, which uprooted 200,000 Rohingyas, and they entered Bangladesh. In 1982, the Citizenship Act and Citizenship Law also excluded Rohingyas from being citizens of that country, and they became deprived of their basic needs. In 1991, over 250,000 Rohingyas from Rakhine State took shelter in Bangladesh. He stated that, from 1993 to 1997, more than 250,000 Rohingyas were repatriated back to Myanmar through different efforts from Bangladesh and the international community. However, the official census was conducted in Myanmar in 2015, and the democratic election was also held in the same year, and the Rohingyas were excluded from both events. In 2017, the global community witnessed a massive exodus of Rohingyas to Bangladesh, and in 2018, the government of Bangladesh sheltered 781,000 Rohingyas and gave them amenities to reside on its land.

Mr Shoieb stressed that after Rohingya intrusion or Rohingyas entrance into Bangladesh, they have heavily strained the resources available for Bangladesh. Particularly, the host community faced the biggest trouble from the Rohingyas exodus; they had to share basic amenities due to the Rohingya presence in the land. Due to



the salinity and the huge pressure of more than 1 million displaced people, the groundwater and freshwater availability have become another challenge for the host communities. The Rohingya exodus had a very negative impact on the price of everyday commodities. About 5,000 acres of forest plants were cut for making the shelters for Rohingyas. The wage rate also decreased due to their presence. So, host communities have to take on risky jobs that were not conventional jobs. This also poses challenges to healthcare services. The presence of the Rohingyas also increased gender-based violence in that part.

Mr Shoieb highlighted that Bangladesh, only on humanitarian grounds, gave shelter to the Rohingyas in its land. Although the country is not a signatory to the refugee convention, the country is spending a huge amount of money every year to provide supports. The government has also taken initiatives to relocate more than 100,000 Rohingyas to Bhashanchar and has created the necessary infrastructure for their settlement. He emphasised that the government has engaged different actors for sustainable and dignified repatriation process where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has taken the lead in those efforts. The government of Bangladesh has taken steps like tripartite initiatives with China and approached Russia to resolve the issue. He further emphasised that Bangladesh has not find much positive output from the efforts of the regional and international actors due to regional, international, and geopolitical interests. Mr Shoieb stated that the humanitarian crisis was seen through a geopolitical and economic lens, which undermines the humanitarian needs and burdens of Bangladesh. He further mentioned that unfortunately some countries have also played a crucial role, for example, some veto-wielding countries repeatedly opposed any kind of resolution passing in the United Nations against Myanmar. A small country like Gambia launched a case against Myanmar in the International Court of Justice (ICJ). He informed that in 2019, the Prime Minister of Myanmar, Aung Sung Suki, denied any kind of allegation of crimes against humanity or genocide. In 2020, the ICJ asked the Myanmar government to stop all kinds of inhumane activities against the Rohingyas. As the Rohingyas have been staying for a long time, this has been taking a big toll on Bangladesh. There are some challenges evolving in that part of the country. The Rohingyas are becoming frustrated day by day, particularly after the military coup in 2021. They consider it as a great barrier of being repatriated back to their homeland.

Mr Shoieb pointed out that Bangladesh is a densely populated, and also trying to graduate from LDC to middle-income country by 2026. The country's SDG plan has been hampered due to their presence. He opined that the Rohingyas can be influenced by the various transnational extremist or terrorist groups, and may join in different illegal activities. He added that it is a challenge, and it can destabilize the regional and global security situation as well. Fund crisis for managing the camps is a big challenge for Bangladesh. Last couple of years, Bangladesh is not receiving the sufficient funds committed by the donors which poses another challenge to hosting the Rohingyas. He stressed that the funding for the shortfall started at 27 per cent in 2017 and ended at less than 50 per cent in 2022. He added that some major global events, like the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the latest Israel-Palestine conflict, have shifted the focus of the global community away from the Rohingyas. The lack of funding has become a major challenge for Bangladesh to meet the basic needs of the Rohingyas.

Addressing the probable solution, Mr Shoieb said that there can be two types of solutions: third-country settlement and repatriation. Although, some countries have shown their interest in taking only a few hundred Rohingyas, this is not a viable solution or viable option for Bangladesh. Safe, dignified, sustainable, and voluntary repatriation is the key and for that, a congenial environment is required in Myanmar. Myanmar should create an environment that is friendly to the Rohingyas and the Rakhine people. He added that the Bangladesh government's top



priority is repatriation, and it needs concerted international efforts from both regional and global actors for the repatriation of Rohingyas.

Mr Shoieb shed light on the current state of the repatriation process. He said that there was a formation of a Bangladesh-Malaysian working group after their exodus in Bangladesh in 2017. However, a single repatriation from Bangladesh to Myanmar has not taken place in last years. Attempts were also made in 2018 and 2019 for repatriation, but they were not successful. The pilot project was supposed to start in 2023, but it didn't start due to the unwillingness of the Myanmar Authority. So, there is no explicit guarantee of citizenship and freedom of movement for the Rohingyas yet. logically, no tangible progress has been witnessed. Due to lack of concerted efforts of the international community are required, and the Rohingyas are in a vicious cycle of regional and global geopolitics. So, the regional and global powers need to understand the humanitarian ground and the burden of Bangladesh on hosting the Rohingyas. The most important concern is the cooperation from Myanmar. Without Myanmar's cooperation, any kind of reparation won't be possible. Myanmar needs to come with good gestures, and for that, robust regional and international efforts, along with Bangladesh's diplomatic endeavours, can make it a success.

In conclusion, Mr Shoieb said that there is a risk of major conflict if there is no viable solution in the near future. Citizenship and assurance of basic rights for a peaceful and secure life in Myanmar are the basic ingredients for the sustainable, voluntary and dignified repatriation of Rohingyas.



**Major General (Retd) Md Nayeem  
Ashfaq Chowdhury, SBP, OSP, SUP,  
psc, PhD**

At the outset of his presentation, Major General (Retd) Md Nayeem Ashfaq Chowdhury stressed on the fact that the Rohingya issue, being one of the most important national crises, demands iterated discussion, evaluation and adjustment of strategy and courses of action. In that count, he noted that the seminar organised by BIIS implied huge significance.

From his perspectives, the Rohingya issue is no longer a mono-string crisis. It is a multidimensional and complex affair having deep involvement of multi-stakeholders. Therefore, he stated that the security dimension is also multi-pronged having strings all along the strategic level to the tactical level. In his view, Bangladesh is bearing the fullest impact of the Rohingya crisis in all possible sectors including security. The civil administration, law enforcement agencies, people representatives and other stakeholders are working day and night to contain the multi-pronged challenges emanating from Rohingya concentration at Cox's Bazar. He mentioned that the existing administrative and security arrangement cannot be considered permanent, nor can it be taken as infallible. He reminded everyone of the notion that the displaced Rohingya population is a concentration of a despaired, traumatised population seeing no light of hope shortly; living in a dense and dire living condition. We cannot expect much from such a battered, uneducated and frustrated population having no effective leadership. So, the security challenges emanating from Rohingya are likely to be more diverse, volatile and complex. As the spectrum of security is dynamic and it changes with the actors' and stakeholders' circumstances and actions. He added that it becomes further complex if the stakeholders' number is more and their involvement is deep.

Major General Chowdhury reiterated that the Rohingya crisis is intensely connected to the geostrategic dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region and particularly the Global South. The geo-economic interest of China in Myanmar and its link to Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC), and access to the Bay of Bengal besides access to the untapped resources of Myanmar is known to all. On the other hand, the US-led QUAD will continue its strategic, economic, and even military moves to contain China against its expansionist initiatives. This power rivalry between the global and regional powers is less likely to diminish let alone end. He implied that, with the economic enrichment of East and South Asian countries, this is rather expected to rise.

Major General Chowdhury provided updates regarding the security situation in Myanmar that it is deteriorating day by day. Myanmar's periphery has been marked by decades of conflict between the military and a plethora of ethnic armies that continue to fuel violence. He referred to a BBC report and stated that, three ethnic insurgent armies (Three Brotherhood Alliance- 3BHA) in Shan State, namely the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the Arakan Army launched a military operation (Operation 1027) in late October 2023 and have overrun military posts, and captured border crossings and the roads carrying most of the overland trade with China. By the end of 11 November 23, the 3BHA claimed to have captured a total of 168 army outposts across the region. He labelled the operation as the most serious setback suffered by the junta since it seized power in February 2021. The Tatmadaw has responded with airstrikes and artillery bombardments which have compelled approximately 48000 people to leave their homes. He mentioned an important aspect of the operation that the government force was unable to bring in reinforcements or recover the ground it had lost. Hundreds of troops were killed including one of the senior commanders of government forces named Brigadier General Aung Kyaw Lwin in northern Shan State. What makes this attack even more significant is that for the first time, armed insurgents operating in Shan State have explicitly aligned themselves to overthrow the junta and restore democratic rule. China which normally acts as a restraining influence on all the groups along its border with Myanmar, has not prevented this operation from going ahead. Major General Chowdhury mentioned that cybercrime and human trafficking are rampant in Shan and Wa States with the involvement of Chinese nationals. The early successes of the alliance's campaign have encouraged resistance forces elsewhere in the country. Even before Operation 1027, the junta's State Administration Council admitted that at least 132 of 330 townships were beyond its control and imposed martial law on at least 44 townships across nine states and regions. Back in 2021, when the military and police violently crushed peaceful protests against the coup, opposition activists decided that they had no choice but to call for a nationwide armed uprising against the junta. Wa State is controlled by the United Wa State Army (UWSA), one of Burma's largest ethnic armed groups. In the region of Sagaing, near the city of Mandalay, pro-democracy groups for the first time retook two townships that were under the control of the military. The Kachin Independence Army seized control of two military installations last month where they faced a barrage of airstrikes and artillery fire from Myanmar Tatmadaw. About 40,000 people have been displaced in Sagaing region and Kachin state. He reminded everyone of the fact that an unstable Myanmar is certainly a security threat for Bangladesh in the form of a further influx of Rohingya, drug or arms trafficking, border security, opening to East Asia and economic activities.

Major General Chowdhury raised the issue of another security concern emerging from Myanmar which is Narco terrorism. Myanmar is one of the territories within the infamous Golden Triangle where illicit opium production occurs. Opium production in Afghanistan has significantly declined in 2022 as the authority has imposed a ban on opium cultivation. Myanmar, which was the world's second-biggest producer of heroin surpassed Afghanistan. The farmers of Myanmar devote more land to growing poppies amid economic turmoil and disruptions. The military, which is in power following the coup in February 2021. is neither willing nor capable of launching a war on opium cultivation and the rapidly growing production of synthetic drugs. In a plummeting economy coupled with a wide range of sanctions by the Western countries followed by investors' exit, there are strong allegations of linking the military's top brass with the drug syndicates to profit from the multibillion-dollar trade. Drug exports generate US\$1 to US\$2 billion annually. Some of the ethnic armed organisations are also allegedly involved in the production and smuggling of drugs as it is more profitable and can earn quick money. In Shan state, 49 per cent of households in the villages cultivate opium poppy. The farmers are forced to grow poppy as the Tatmadaw issued heavy taxes on other traditional crops. Major General Chowdhury reiterated that

the regional countries and the world need to worry about wide-scale poverty, poor governance, conflict-stricken territory and a plummeting economy of Myanmar creating a conducive environment for drug production and trafficking. Drugs are being trafficked to countries like China, Thailand, India, Laos, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, South Korea, Cambodia, etc.

He highlighted another security concern of this region which is the rise of the Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF), an armed group in Bangladesh and its potential to be connected with the same ethnicity armed group living in Mizoram of India and Chin state of Myanmar. The KNF first surfaced in Bandarban in October 2022. So far 16 people including three military personnel have been killed in an armed conflict against KNF. Bangladesh Army launched massive combing operations throughout the region. On 5 November 2023, Kuki-Chin sat with the government and the security forces for peace talk and agreed on a ceasefire until 20 December 2023. It is alleged that KNF is providing training to an Islamist group. He expressed his concern that the proximity of Rohingya camps poses a potential threat of a connection between the KNF and Rohingya which endangers the security architecture of the region.

Major General Chowdhury inferred that immediate Rohingya repatriation appears to be dim and distant under the current situation. A coordinated internal and external pressure might help to compel the Myanmar military junta to change their stubborn attitude of not taking back the Rohingya. He then provided several recommendations in this regard. First of all, he stated that the Rohingyas have to be contained within their camps and monitored constantly with adequate security and intelligence arrangements. The concerned stakeholders have to take adequate measures to address the spillover effect of Narco-terrorism in Myanmar. He noted that the security agencies must take appropriate measures to defuse the rise of KNF and its possibility of connection with Rohingya. Major General Chowdhury recommended that the Rohingya leadership should be encouraged to grow and use them effectively to contain illegal and unlawful activities by Rohingya including guidance for the future generation. He also recommended that the repatriation initiative by China has to be supported and continued raising the issue at every possible platform. In this regard, all possible support should be provided to Gambia for trial in ICJ. Continued effective diplomatic efforts should also be ensured in support of the Rohingya repatriation process. Based on the current unstable political and security situation in Myanmar, all sorts of support should be rendered to the initiative by the international community who are voicing Myanmar's crime against humanity to bring back democracy in Myanmar. In the concluding remarks, Major General Chowdhury reiterated that the Rohingya issue is one of the most critical and complex national issues. Therefore, he proposed that the government may consider forming a national commission to deal with the affairs appropriately.





### **Dr Imtiaz A Hussain**

*Professor, Department of Globalisation Studies and  
Governance School of Liberal Arts and Social Science  
Independent University, Bangladesh*

Professor Dr Imtiaz A Hussain presented the paper “Rohingya crisis and the future of repatriation: it’s now (in 2023) or never!’. He said the question to be investigated was repatriation. He talked of two sets of forces: first were endogenous forces which were internal, meaning accumulating pressures from various forces of security. Second were exogenous forces which were bilateral, trilateral, multilateral and plurilateral partnerships or collaborations. He thanked Major General Nayeem Ashfaque Chowdhury for stressing security aspects of the Rohingya crisis. There was really a need of taking a look into what was being done to build up Bangladesh’s case for repatriation of Rohingya. Otherwise, it would be very difficult. Security is the most important factor. It could be broken down into many dimensions: political, economic, environmental, and social. There had been a number of forest fires and people being killed inside the camps consequently. Up to August this year, the number of deaths crossed 48 which last year was 40. There are opposing groups, infighting, and these groups also had affiliation back in Myanmar. It is not just fighting between and among these groups inside, but there would also be fears of penetration by Muslim extremists, drug cartels, weapon trade, etc., to complicate the political setting. To worsen this, there were arson fires, and these were not only created by them, but also the way these shanties are made in the camps, contain no window, thus accumulating smoke. It is like a grenade waiting for explosion at any time if not effectively taken care of. Extreme care should, therefore, be exercised in handling all these. With over 1.1 million Rohingyas now, alongside the 3,00,000 that came earlier in 2017 and many of them moved for assimilation into Bangladeshi society. They can open up loopholes, through which existing camp residents can come out and escape, as quite a few are already doing. This is an anecdotal reality being reflected effectively. On economic security, he said, Bangladesh was not receiving enough assistance. The country needs about US\$ 01 billion a year to just look after the Rohingyas it already has, but in reality, is getting about quarter of that amount committed. This amount may be increased if Bangladesh continues to push, but its own resources are depleting rapidly instead. That cannot go on, especially as being hit by pandemic and post-pandemic inflation at the same time. These issues must be addressed since how some of them may become more disturbing, is only a question of time. This is why he titled the paper as “Now or Never”, because these cinders were ready to burst.

Environmental security should receive much higher attention. Bangladesh is losing a lot of land not just because Rohingyas are chopping them off for food and fuel, but that itself also creates erosion and there will be little



protection left for monsoon. That segment of the camps is expanding at a time when the country does not have sufficient resources and that is having indirect impacts on local communities: how they can handle it and see some of their opportunities being lost at the cinders, are issues of concern. On social security dimension, Dr Hussain said nearly half of these Rohingyas are children. If children are not taught when they are in first, second or third year, they are unlikely to have any training for future. The same thing is happening with Rohingyas in camps. Up to 50,000 children are being borne, living there and growing up. These shade and shape instincts, not institutions or interests, which last for whole life. That means there are generations of future possibilities becoming disappearing by living in the camps. When exogenous factors are considered, different levels of analyses can be used in terms of relevance/importance. Dr Hussain chose international factors first, because without such support, Bangladesh would not be able to proceed further on its own in solving this crisis. Here, he stressed on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) picking up the genocide allegation submitted by the Gambia in February 2022, ruling on the issue which included four rulings and three of them were unanimous with the remaining one containing censure of Myanmar. They will probably make the final determination, i.e., ruling, this year. Bangladesh should wait for that, but must also prepare to do whatever the result might be. Much of this is going on privately, but things that could be sensed from outside, it could be said there was a lot going on and must be addressed. On international level, he said of coming to know about a meeting being arranged by the UN between Myanmar and Bangladeshi officials where plan was to bring some of them over to Teknaf, show the camps and begin negotiations. Thus, February 2023 set things in motion towards some sort of an accommodation and it is well-known that no accommodation is possible without repatriation; such is the explosive nature of life in the camps. Dr Hussain then focused on some bilateral agreements, a lot of which too were going on privately. Negotiations are almost always conducted in private if they are to succeed. Bangladesh approached China, India, and Japan quite a few times. Through China, there had been the Kunming meeting. It was in May and some kind of rough agreement was made whereby China might step in and help Bangladesh. This is the repatriation that is working and 1,100 were taken over the year. They wanted really to go and eager to visit but were stumped by the military in Myanmar. They could not muster up the confidence to go back. Bangladesh is left with their bad memories of that. How to overcome this, needs delicate handling. Likewise, investors in Myanmar like Japan and India are not obtaining return from their investments in Myanmar due to the civil war. Outputs of infrastructural projects and economic corridors are being delayed as well, driving them restless with Myanmar. This might help Bangladesh now also. but was not very important unlike earlier. It might grow stronger as time goes by, but as that happens, other things might explode before, thus trumping all diplomatic efforts. Similarly, with the regional, one might also call it multilateral or plurilateral, the most important thing for Bangladesh would be ASEAN for various reasons. It is not just the Rohingya crisis, but Bangladesh is also negotiating very sincerely and seriously for free trade agreements. The atmosphere for those efforts really would improve if Bangladesh could get something here and repatriation might be one of those things to help Bangladesh in such negotiations indeed.

Dr Hussain then asked, what future could be predicted from all this discussion? There would be little need of waiting but the only thing that could wait is negotiation which had become imperative. Simultaneously, the civil war is going on in Myanmar and the restlessness building up, or could be said, multiplying. He visited the camp in Ukhia in February 2023. The people they talked with then, were found later in the year to have restlessness and determination to do something; they were moving in a negative direction as opposed to in February, when an element of hope could be found, among the teenagers especially. It is also happening as right now this year, the whole global South received an impetus. It is not what happened in Johannesburg with the BRICS, addition

of 11 new members, and Bangladesh waiting for the next round, but also the G20 summit, the richest club in the world, making global South the top issue. He believed these in reality, had substantial power, albeit not the punch of military alliances like that of QUAD's. They do carry some weight, especially now, which is very different from the Bandung Conference era of the 1950s or '60s, when nonalignment lacked the punch countries needed and probably have at present. On takeaways of the discussion, he said there were lots of elements to pay attention to. There was also need of pushing for more negotiations but those should be forceful. Bangladesh should, therefore, have a number of alternative plans, policy options for all stakeholders and see where these would actually take it. The country should not side with any particular bloc, be it India's Act East, the US' Indo-Pacific Strategy, or BRI of China. They all have something appealing for Bangladesh. How Bangladesh would navigate its own way through them, is the art of diplomacy and this was what Dr Hussain encouraged the younger generation present in the seminar to follow. On Bhasan Char, he said it was some kind of assimilation and something from the figures he had midway through the year. There were 75,000 Rohingyas and nearly half of these were children. Hence, education had obviously to play a big part in it. If the education is in Myanmar curriculum or Bangladesh's own, their future was at stake, he thought. Then he asked if Bangladeshi people wanted to meet them annually inside the country or on the border. Bangladesh must be careful and make some plans. It could be said that selective freedom in some camps might ease such pressure. It was not something he would recommend but Bangladesh need still to do something about this in Rohingya camps on the mainland. On regional and international levels, a quid pro quo approach should be adopted, not sine qua non, which would be like this only and nothing else. The end result might not be liked by all, but would probably be better than what existed before.

## OPEN DISCUSSION



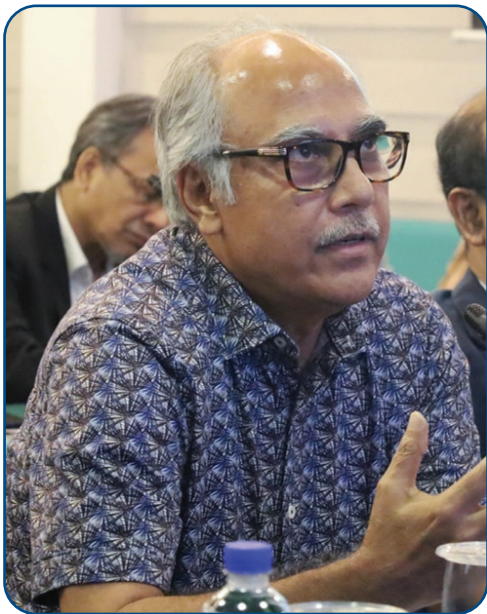
**H E Mr Yao Wen**

*Ambassador of China to Bangladesh*

**H E Mr Yao Wen, Ambassador of China to Bangladesh**, highlighted the role of China in solving the Rohingya issue. He stated that one of his top priorities was to collaborate with Bangladesh and Myanmar to advance the resolution of the Rohingya crisis. In this regard, China aspires to be the mediator and the facilitator. However, the issue has to be resolved between Bangladesh and Myanmar first. China would attempt to mediate a resolution and bring them together. He appreciated the efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in solving the issue. Significant progress has been made since the end of 2022. He stated that repatriation is the ultimate solution. There is no other way out. He observed that both the Myanmar and Bangladeshi sides are sincere in their desire to find a solution. However, he also noted that it was a difficult task. Any understanding, nevertheless, must be put into practice by practical agreements. He commented that nobody brought up the Rohingyas' desires. If they would like to returned? He also saw the deep mistrust that exists between the government of Myanmar and the Rohingya people. The Myanmar government has made numerous promises about how they will be dealt with if they return. But the Rohingyas are having difficulties trusting them. In addition, the Rohingyas have a lot of requirements. He opined that some requirements are critical.

H E Mr Yao Wen said that understanding the circumstances in Myanmar is also necessary. Myanmar is in a difficult situation. He commented that Myanmar itself is a victim. It will be under a sanction imposed by the international community for a long time. Economic and political sanctions are in place at the moment. Therefore, there are limitations to what Myanmar can offer. He noticed that there were many gaps between the requests of the Rohingyas and what Myanmar could provide. Besides, the international donors consistently state that the situation is not right for repatriation. So, all these affect the repatriation process. He emphasised that favourable conditions must exist before starting the repatriation process.

Nevertheless, he expressed optimism for repatriation despite the difficulties. He stated that additional work needs to be done to bridge the gaps. There is a need to be mindful of matters such as the security situation in the Rakhine state and the willingness of the Rohingya people. Besides, there is a need to ensure safety if they want to go back. He promised that China would play its role. To resolve the matter, they will collaborate with Bangladesh and Myanmar. He hoped to come up with a good arrangement so that the Rohingyas could repatriate.



**Ambassador Md Abdul Hannan**

Ambassador Md Abdul Hannan thanked the organiser for arranging the seminar. He was delighted to see the thought-provoking presentations. He appreciated the effort of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has given the utmost priority to repatriating the Rohingyas to their motherland. However, he agreed with Professor Imitaz that the Rohingya's lack of trust is a barrier to successful repatriation. He commented that it is necessary to take matters seriously. With the current state of world politics, Israel's intervention in Gaza is receiving a lot of attention, as was with the Ukraine War earlier. So, the circumstances are evolving rapidly. He stated that the situation appears to be intricate and multifaceted strategically. He emphasised the need to initiate the repatriation process as soon as possible. He believed that China and India are the most important pillars in the region in solving the Rohingya crisis.





**Group Captain (Retd) Dr Mohammad  
Zahidul Islam Khan**

*Register, American International University*

Dr Khan stressed that in solving the Rohingya crisis, Bangladesh has to solve it diplomatically, but the appropriate diplomatic tool needs to be understood. He said that diplomacy is defined in such a way that it's like a velvet globe on an iron fist. He thinks that the presentation by Professor Imtiaz highlighted some aspects that the hard power is missing, but Dr Khan thinks it's not missing; rather, it is less explored. A visible demonstration in the current context regarding what is happening in Shan state, where martial law was declared, and China has expressed concern Dr Khan suggested that we can think of doubling some assets and infrastructure in that area from a defensive point of view, particularly, for example, increasing the number of helipads that we have along the border with night-flying facilities and the sensor that would be strengthening the Iron Fist under the velvet globe.

Dr Khan further said that the other important thing is the current context of what is going on in Shan State, which is a perfect one for us to explore on this avenue. The second thing he focused on was diplomacy. We often talk about our strategic autonomy that we want to exercise; we need to find out and send a signal to the regional players. If the regional key players are unable to address this issue, we should exercise our strategic autonomy by engaging extra-regional powers and the Burma Act. He stressed exploring the possibility of leveraging the Burma Act, which was passed in the United States Congress, and it could be one avenue that sends a strategic signal to the regional players to strengthen our position because it is not correct that the United Nations Security Council has not passed any resolution on Myanmar. They have passed a resolution, but there was an explicit extension by three players; two of them are regional key players, and one is, of course, our neighbor. He said that it is one area of exercising and sending a signal that we are ready to exercise our strategic autonomy. He said that another point that can be explored is the bold declaration by the National Unity Government about the Rohingya policy. We are maintaining some bit of strategic ambiguity on this. It is okay to maintain our diplomatic relations and a formal one with the junta. However, if one reads the Irrawaddy, New Light of Myanmar, or all the other Myanmar newspapers, they will find how that is portrayed in that domestic audience about Bangladesh's position. Bangladesh may explore potential candidate or covered connections on that front. He emphasized the presentation made by Professor Imtiaz that, on the legal side, the ICJ special prosecutor has visited Bangladesh a number of times, which is published in one of his articles, 'Global Responsibility to Protect', in the Brill Journal.



Dr Khan said that he explored the possibility of establishing an International Court Tribunal for Rohingyas in line with the others, regarding what happened in Kampuchea, Rwanda, and other places that could be the next step after the ICJ ruling. For this, three things are required: first, it has to dissociate the state actor from the individual actor, so the target should be the individual actor; then, there should be inside participation from the region; and finally, participation from within the Myanmar civil society organisations.



**Professor Begum Touhida Faruki**

*Former Director General*

*Directorate of Women and Children Development*

Professor Begum Touhida Faruki praised the Honourable Prime Minister for her decision to provide shelter to the Rohingya people on humanitarian grounds. But the issue has turned into a multifaceted problem. She mentioned that the government has been trying to solve the crisis since 2017, but we have made little progress in this regard. She noted that this happened because we have not really been able to engage the neighbouring partners. Both China and India have critical geopolitical interest in Myanmar. Keeping that in mind, she recommended that Bangladesh should focus on engaging external partners to put pressure on Myanmar.



**Professor Dr Rashed al Mahmud Titumir**

*Chairman, Department of Development Studies  
Dhaka University*

Professor Dr Rashed al Mahmud Titumir said the Rohingya crisis emerged because of an externality and understanding the internality was also important, both as a human bomb who are in the Rohingya camps as well as the internality associated with the civil strife in Myanmar. Another factor to be focused on was why the junta was engaged in the zero-sum game. Referring to General Chowdhury's paper, he said the discussion in terms of Bangladesh's case was quite critical. Another important issue he said was not discussed, were the miscellaneous developments occurring currently because of connectivity, which are required for Bangladesh to move forward in its aspiration of becoming a developed country. The country also needs to move through Myanmar either to China, or through Thailand to Malaysia, Indonesia. Dr Titumir said he was quite sure there was some sort of rethinking in terms of enhancement of Bangladesh's diplomatic relations with Myanmar in this sense. Because, six officers would not be able to do this. It remains a vital undertaking how Bangladesh would engage itself. Bangladesh has had longstanding ties with Myanmar, but never really put focus on that country as regards engagement. For locating Bangladesh's preparedness in this regard, there was the need of a form or shape in terms of being defensive, which meant deterrence was necessary.

Dr Titumir said that if China would assert that owing to historical reasons, i.e., Burma was the first non-communist government to recognise China; their relationship is called "pauk-phaw" relationship and Myanmar is leveraging on it. That is because of Chinese aspirations and those of Bangladesh with this major power, the latter would really have to see the result and people should believe in it. Besides, he said, India shares 1,600 kilometres of border with Myanmar, is the 4th largest export destination and 5th largest import source for them. Hence, how would India like to see things? Because, India's continuous abstinence did not provide any signal to the friendly people of Bangladesh, which became a big question mark in the country's understanding, particularly, by people at large. Hence, how Bangladesh should prepare, given the situation in Bandarban, should be considered. There are obviously other tactics involving the Feni fault line. It would also be very crucial how Bangladesh would address itself, but certainly not miss its development through being connected with Myanmar. Because, that is hampering the aspiration and capabilities of Bangladesh.

## RESPONSES FROM THE SPEAKERS



**Dr Imtiaz A Hussain**

In response, Dr Imtiaz A Hussain, said the main dictum of Bangladesh's foreign policy, i.e., "friendship to all, malice to none" has been with the country since 1966 when Bangabandhu declared the 6-point Movement, and there is need of working more on this, especially in dialogues and conversations. It is not possible to know what diplomats are doing behind the doors, and thus, there is no chance of preemption or sabotage through comments. Because there are things that can be said and cannot be said. At this point, Dr Husain spoke on hard power. He believed hard power is not at all consistent with "friendship to all, malice to none" policy, silence in golden, something that should be avoided, as Bangladesh's budget and priorities were not simply there. The country is not shouldering most of the tasks itself just because of the Rohingyas present on its soil. It not only includes border protection facing incursions, something Bangladesh never faced before, but also environmental collapse. These issues should receive much more attention to protect the country before a bigger disaster occurs. The whole issue should be approached in that manner. Bangladesh must emit to others, especially the ASEAN and their policymakers, and get out of the readymade garments (RMG) diction. The only market it would find, would have to be in Southeast Asia. There is also the need of working on developing new export items that can be sold there. Negotiations should be continuously pursued with them and being silent on Rohingya, he thought, would help clear the atmosphere for such discussions. Bhasan Char is emitting that Bangladesh is really doing something on its own. There would of course be, for and against sides on every issue, but since his record showed about 75,000 went there, there is something that must be nourished, nurtured, and especially get a number of international organisations to see it from Bangladesh's standpoint, instead of what he called "stereotypical international aid mindset". The country should also push items, as India was mentioned, cultivate, and promote Indian projects in Southeast Asia, e.g., those related with Mekong and Brahmaputra rivers, BCIM could be revived; these will help build up the cooperative spirit necessary for Bangladesh to address the issue. This would not happen overnight, but unless initiatives were taken immediately, that could create more difficulties later. He

then said the title and subtitle of his presentation were “Now or never”, as he was looking forward to 2024 and that year already became riddled with some of the biggest puzzles to be faced even before the Gaza war broke out. Many countries, including Bangladesh, would be holding elections, e.g., India, the US, and another potential in Britain, some of the heavyweights whose stand ripples to issues like the Rohingya crisis, would be making decisions, demoting the issues Bangladesh is prioritising. Dr Hussain thought this somehow must be factored into any analytical scholarly discussion and certainly in diplomacy.



**Major General (Retd) Md Nayeem  
Ashfaq Chowdhury**

In his response, Major General (Retd) Md Nayeem Ashfaq Chowdhury explained where Bangladesh stands in dealing with the Rohingya crisis in the context of changing geopolitical dynamics shaped by the Israel Palestine conflict and Ukraine War. In order to keep the Rohingya issue vibrant and alive in the international forum, he reiterated that we have to engage all possible stakeholders in every possible platform as the issue is a multi-stakeholder one. Therefore, the issue must be raised and discussed at regional, global, bilateral, trilateral and multilateral level. As only 50 per cent of the promised financial assistance was given this year by the international community, he recommended that it is the duty of Bangladesh to raise the issue everywhere in order to ensure the survival of the Rohingya people. In the changing global scenario, in addition to the Government of Bangladesh, every concerned agency including the media have their role to play in raising this issue at appropriate platforms.

Major General Chowdhury also stressed that we should also focus on the issue of deterrence. He noted that Bangladesh is not a belligerent country, but we have to provide the message of our resilience if anyone comes to interfere in security matters. Regarding the issue of connectivity with the NUG, he also agrees with the proposition that we should maintain correspondence with them in accordance with the mode of communication of the international community in this regard.



## CHIEF GUEST



### **H E Ambassador Masud Bin Momen**

*Foreign Secretary (Senior Secretary)*

*Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)*

*Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh*

H E Ambassador Masud Bin Momen started his speech by thanking BIISS for arranging the important seminar on Rohingya crisis and repatriation process. Bangladesh has been facing the multifaceted Rohingya crisis for a long time, particularly after the en-mass forced displacement of Rohingyas from Rakhine State into Bangladesh in October 2016 to August 2017. Around 1.2 million Rohingyas are staying for more than six years in Cox's Bazar with around 30,000 newborn children adding to that number every year. Despite numerous constraints and bitter past experiences in repatriation, Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina decided to give shelter temporarily to such a massive number of forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals and thus saved thousands of innocent lives. The singular gesture has been recognized by the international community as the Hon'ble Prime Minister is known as the "Mother of Humanity".

Bangladesh has been paying a very high price for the problem formulated, orchestrated, originated and executed in Myanmar. According to a study Bangladesh has to spend around US\$ 1.22 billion every year on the Rohingya response, a figure growing with the increase of population, inflation, and the decline in foreign assistance. The Rohingya crisis has entailed tremendous strain on the infrastructure, water supply and agricultural outputs, livelihood of the host community, as well as on our social stability. He believes that it has caused demographic imbalance with Rohingyas outnumbering the host community and increased economic vulnerabilities of the local community. Consequently, the tension between the host community and Rohingyas is increasing. The crisis has adversely impacted the biodiversity of Cox's Bazar, in particular the 6,800 acres of reserved forest where the Rohingyas are sheltered. Deforestation, soil erosion, and water pollution are among the environmental problems that have been observed in the area due to the high concentration of Rohingyas in the Camps.

With the evolving humanitarian crisis around the globe, it has become challenging to secure necessary funds for the Rohingya response. For instance, due to the critical fund deficit this year, WFP reduced the monthly food



ration from 12US\$ in December 202 to 8US\$ from June 2023. Various Rohingya miscreant groups are active inside the camps and often they engage in armed clashes with each other to take control of certain areas inside the camps and illegal business including drug, mostly Yaba and arm trafficking. Bangladesh is committed to ensure the safety and security of the FDMNs following international Standards. Bangladesh government has engaged about three thousand committed security personnel, beside the other security agencies, to improve the security situation inside the 33 camps in Cox's Bazar. Community policing involving Rohingya volunteers patrol inside the camps at night side by side with the security agencies. Still the security situation is deteriorating.

The prolongation of the stalemate in repatriation is leading this vulnerable population more frustrated and turning them susceptible to unlawful activities and encouraging them to undertake ventures risking their lives. It can have greater ramifications on sub-regional, regional and global levels. Rohingyas are becoming more vulnerable to radicalization. A group of transnational human and drug traffickers are targeting Rohingya youths, women and children, particularly for forced labour in different countries of South East Asia. The sea route through the Bay of Bengal has become a prominent spot for illegal migration and human trafficking. The advantageous geo-political location of Bangladesh for bilateral and regional connectivity, investment, and trade is much of the interest of other countries. Stalemate of the Rohingya crisis for an indefinite period can make us susceptible to geopolitical rivalry.

Bangladesh government has adopted measures to keep the Rohingyas particularly children and youth engaged in productive activities inside the camps. Government in collaboration with the UN Agencies, are imparting education to the Rohingya children following Myanmar Curriculum through more than 6000 learning centres, developing portable skills of Rohingyas in the traits available in Rakhine and engaging Rohingyas as volunteers in humanitarian operations in a systematic and effective ways. These initiatives are helping them to practice their own culture and it would help their reintegration when they return to Rakhine State. We should never forget or have doubts that sustainable repatriation of the Rohingyas in Rakhine state is the ultimate solution to the crisis. Bangladesh is working towards safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable return of the Rohingyas to Rakhine State. Systematic disenfranchisement and frequent indiscriminate persecutions against Rohingyas by successive Governments of Myanmar since the 1960s led to their continued influx to Bangladesh. However, before the last exodus of 2016 and 2017, Myanmar took most of the Rohingya back.

Bangladesh always sought a durable solution to the Rohingya crisis peacefully through negotiations with Myanmar. The two countries signed three instruments after the exodus in 2017 on repatriation. Two attempts taken in 2018 and 2019 to start repatriation were not successful as the selected Rohingyas were unwilling to join the process in the absence of a favourable situation in Rakhine, lack of sufficient assurances about their security, and sustainable livelihood opportunities by the Myanmar government. The Covid-19 pandemic and military takeover of 1 February 2021 in Myanmar had created some uncertainties for repatriation. As you are aware, we are working with Myanmar to commence repatriation of the first batch of returnees and its success will be followed up by return of successive batches following a road map. China is playing the role as a facilitator in this process.

Due to their long stay out of Rakhine, the Rohingyas may have doubts about their place of return and the facilities they will receive upon return. To build their confidence, we arranged a visit of 20 prospective returnees to the places of resettlement in Rakhine State on 05 May 2023 in collaboration with Myanmar. Moreover, 14 high

officials of Myanmar visited Cox's Bazar camps on 25 May 2023 to brief about how their basic necessities e.g., security and safety, education, healthcare, identity, livelihood opportunity would be met after their return to Rakhine State. Another team of Myanmar officials briefed the first batch of returnees in Teknaf on 31 October about additional facilities. These visits and exchange of views were arranged to help the prospective returnees to take well-informed decisions regarding voluntarily joining the repatriation initiative. Rohingyas expressed their willingness to resettle in their place of origin whereas Myanmar wants them to resettle them in twenty model villages claiming that some of those villages are places of origin of limited Rohingyas considered for the first batch of repatriation. The Myanmar delegation assured the Rohingyas to consider their expectations and inform Myanmar's position on this issue later on.

Safety and security are the prime concern of the returnees. During their briefings, the Myanmar officials had assured to arrange their safety and security in Rakhine State. However, we experienced the spill-over adverse impact of the intense armed conflicts among Myanmar Military, Border Guard Police and Ethnic Armed Organisation (EAO) Arakan Army in Rakhine during July-October in 2022.

However, there are mounting tensions in Rakhine State as the Military has been beefing up its forces in Rakhine for the past week as the insurgent Arakan Army are taking part in a resistance offensive that might expand to other parts in the country. Bangladesh hopes no conflict will erupt in Rakhine State.

H E said that improving the situation on the ground in the northern Rakhine and the smooth conduct of the repatriation and reintegration of forcibly displaced persons are enormous tasks. Support, engagement and assistance of ASEAN, UN agencies, friendly countries and international partners are much needed for that. Volunteers of ASEAN Center, UNHCR, other UN agencies and other countries can play a role of confidence builders in the places of return and settlement of Rohingyas. Bangladesh is in touch with ASEAN and other friendly nations in this regard. Myanmar has assured that ASEAN, UNHCR, other UN agencies and friendly countries would be allowed to work in the transit and villages of resettlement of the returnees. However, the trilateral MoU of Myanmar with UNDP and UNHCR is yet to be extended. We hope it will be extended soon.

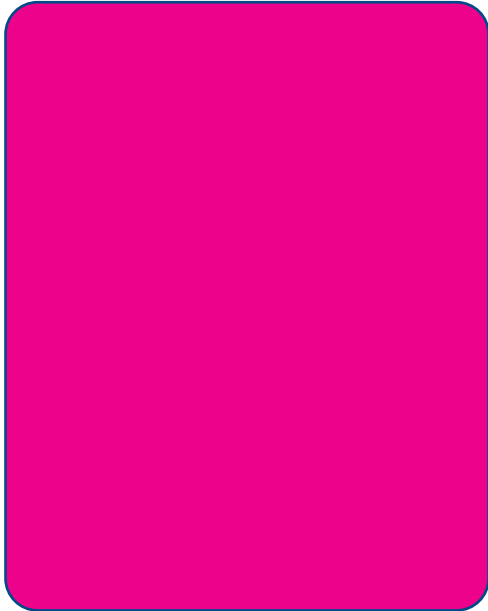
While the current focus of the international community is to bring back normalcy in Myanmar, Bangladesh expects that their concerted efforts will also focus on addressing the Rohingya repatriation. Without ensuring the rights of the ethnic minorities of Myanmar, including the Rohingya, the peace, stability and democracy in Myanmar would not be sustainable. It would be a gross mistake to solely focus on the political turmoil. We all collectively need to address the root causes of the conflict, promote inclusive and sustainable development in Rakhine State, provide essential services and create livelihood opportunities for the displaced persons upon return.

Unfortunately, increasing trade and investment relationships of few powerful countries with Myanmar and the supply of growing military equipment are promoting the interest of Myanmar to take tougher stands against Rohingya. By now, we all understand that targeted sections of a few selected individuals and entities, cannot have a binding impact on Myanmar. The question of international justice and accountability will be critical in finding a durable solution to the Rohingya crisis. It would also act as an importance confidence-building measure for the sustainable repatriation of the Rohingya to their homes in Myanmar. While we are supporting all justice mechanisms, the Rohingyas expect that they can see the result at a shortest possible time.

We know various vested interested groups and anti-repatriation elements are active inside the camps for pursuing interests and benefits. The standard of definition of a “conductive environment” or “dignified” return are relative and will vary from country to country. The large-scale forced displacement of Rohingyas from Rakhine State took place under the so-called democratic Government in Myanmar. Demand for restoring their citizenship as a precondition for repatriation is also not fully ratified. It is an internal legal affair of Myanmar and Rohingyas had no citizenship right during their forced displacement in Bangladesh in 2016 and 2017. Their expectation of having citizenship restored can only be materialized after returning to Myanmar. However, Myanmar can announce a “Pathway to citizenship” as per the Kofi Annan Commission Report’s recommendations.

Bangladesh will seek constructive engagement of all concerned to let the Rohingyas decide themselves about joining the repatriation initiative. Right to live in their own place is a basic one and everyone should work together to facilitate that. The country will discourage negative propaganda should be undertaken from any quarter to demoralize or demotivate Rohingyas as to join the repatriation pilot project.

## CLOSING REMARKS BY THE CHAIR



**Ambassador A F M Gousal Azam Sarker**  
*Chairman, Bangladesh Institute of international and Strategic Studies (BIISS)*

Ambassador A F M Gousal Azam Sarker thanked all the paper presenters, participants and the Chief Guest of the programme. He stated that there are two strands of this problem discussed in the seminar- one is security dimensions and the other is repatriation process of the forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals, FDMN. Both deserve extensive discussions. The interlinked issues of security and repatriation are concerned for both Myanmar and Bangladesh primarily and other stakeholders. The chair believes that it is a complex problem which is evolving and shaping the geopolitics of the region. So, all the countries need to collaborate for safe repatriation process of Rohingya to their homeland.





## EDITORIAL BOARD

*Chief Editor*

**Md Abu Bakar Siddique Khan, ndc, afwc, psc, G+**  
Director General

*Editor*

**Shahriar Javed Chowdhury**  
Research Director

*Assistant Editors*

**Dr Sufia Khanom**, Senior Research Fellow  
**Mahbubur Rashid Bhuiyan**, Research Fellow  
**Moutusi Islam**, Research Fellow  
**Farzana Fatima**, Research Officer  
**Nur Ahmed**, Research Officer

The Editorial Team thankfully acknowledges Rafa Tabassum Ali and Fahim Shahriar Ornob, Research Intern, for their assistance in preparing the proceedings.

• **Books**

- South Asian Regional Cooperation: A Socio-economic Approach to Peace and Stability (1985)
- Nation Building in Bangladesh: Retrospect and Prospect (1986)
- The Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace (1986)
- The Security of Small States (1987)
- ASEAN Experiences of Regional and Inter-regional Cooperation: Relevance for SAARC (1988)
- Development, Politics and Security: Third World Context (1990)
- Bangladesh and SAARC: Issues, Perspectives and Outlook (1992)
- Bangladesh: Society, Polity and Economy (1993)
- South Asia's Security: Primacy of Internal Dimension (1994)
- Chandabaji Versus Entrepreneurship: Youth Force in Bangladesh (1999)
- Development Cooperation at the Dawn of the Twenty First Century: Bangladesh-German Partnership in Perspective (2000)
- Conflict Management and Sub-regional Co-operation in ASEAN: Relevance of SAARC (2000)
- National Security of Bangladesh in the 21st Century (2000)
- Civil Society and Democracy in Bangladesh (2002)
- Regional Co-operation in South Asia: New Dimensions and Perspectives (2002)
- Confidence Building Measures and Security Cooperation in South Asia : Challenges in the New Century (2002)
- Bangladesh-Southeast Asia Relations: Some Insights (2002)
- Security in the Twenty First Century: A Bangladesh Perspective (2003)
- 25 Years of BIISS: An Anthology (2003)
- Politics and Security in South Asia: Salience of Religion and Culture (2004)
- Small States and Regional Stability in South Asia (2005)
- Religious Militancy and Security in South Asia (2006)
- Global War on Terror: Bangladesh Perspective (2007)
- Towards BIMSTEC-Japan Comprehensive Economic Cooperation: Bangladesh Perspective (2007) Democracy, Governance and Security Reforms: Bangladesh Context (2008)
- Whither National Security Bangladesh 2007 (2008)
- National Security Bangladesh 2008 (2009)
- Human Security Approach to Counter Extremism in South Asia: Relevance of Japanese Culture (2010)
- National Security Bangladesh 2009 (2010)
- Energy Security in South Asia Plus: Relevance of Japanese Experience (2016)
- Changing Global Dynamics: Bangladesh Foreign Policy (2018)
- Bangladesh in International Peacebuilding: Discourses from Japan and Beyond (2019)
- Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation (2021)
- Militancy and National Security of Bangladesh: Policy Options and Strategic Outlook (2021)
- Glimpses on Bangladesh : A Country of Hope, Love, Courage and Resilience (2022)

- **South Asia Human Security Series**

Nepali State, Society and Human Security : An Infinite Discourse (2008)  
 Evolving Security Discourse in Sri Lanka: From National Security to Human Security (2008)  
 Violence, Terrorism and Human Security in South Asia (2008)  
 Women and Human Security in South Asia: The Cases of Bangladesh and Pakistan (2008)  
 Human Security in India: Health, Shelter and Marginalisation (2010)  
 Pakistan: Haunting Shadows of Human Security (2009)  
 Human Security in India: Discourse, Practices and Policy Implications (2010)  
 Human Security Index for South Asia: Exploring Relevant Issues (2011)  
 Ethnicity and Human Security in Bangladesh and Pakistan (2012)

- **BIISS Papers (Monograph Series)**

The Assam Tangle : Outlook for the Future (1984)  
 The Crisis in Lebanon: Multi-dimensional Aspects and Outlook for the Future (1985)  
 India's Policy Fundamentals, Neighbours and Post-Indira Developments (1985)  
 Strategic Aspects of Indo-Sri Lanka Relations (1986)  
 Indo-Bangladesh Common Rivers and Water Diplomacy (1986)  
 Gulf War : The Issues Revisited (1987)  
 The SAARC in Progress : A Hesitant Course of South Asian Transition (1988)  
 Post-Brezhnev Soviet Policy Towards the Third World (1988)  
 Changing Faces of Socialism (1989)  
 Sino-Indian Quest for Rapprochement: Implications for South Asia (1989)  
 Intifada : The New Dimension to Palestinian Struggle (1990)  
 Bangladesh : Towards National Consensus (in Banes, 1990)  
 Environmental Challenges to Bangladesh (1991)  
 The Gulf War and the New World Order : Implication for the Third World (1992)  
 Challenges of Governance in India : Fundamentals under Threat (1995)  
 Bangladesh in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (1998)  
 Nuclearisation of South Asia : Challenges and Options for Bangladesh (1998)  
 The Middle East Peace Process and the Palestinian Statehood (2000)  
 Pakistan and Bangladesh : From Conflict to Cooperation (2003)  
 Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Bangladesh : A Case for People's Management (2003)  
 WTO Dispute Settlement System and Developing Countries: A Neorealist Critique (2004)  
 State Sovereignty and Humanitarian Intervention : Does One Negate the Other? (2006)  
 Unipolarity and Weak States: The Case of Bangladesh (2009)  
 Japan's Strategic Rise (2010)  
 The Fallacy of Fragile States Indices: Is There a Fragility Trap (2017)  
 Implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative for Bangladesh: A Strategic Analysis (2020)  
 Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience: A Quest for Human Security in Bangladesh (2020)  
 Information Disorder In the Information Age: Actors, Tactics, and Impacts in South and Southeast Asia (2020)  
 Covid-19 Pandemic in Bangladesh: Economic Impacts and Policy Implications (2020)  
 Understanding Bangabandhu's Foreign Policy: Principles, Priorities and Diplomatic Strategies (2021)  
 Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals: Political Security and Humanitarian Assistance (2022)

• **BIISS Seminar Proceedings**

- Contemporary Development Debate: Bangladesh in the Global Context (2014)
- Moving from MDGs to SDGs: Bangladesh Experience and Expectation (2015)
- SAARC at 30: Achievements, Potentials and Challenges (2015)
- Bangladesh's Relations with Latin American Countries: Unlocking Potentials (2016)
- Civil-Military Relations in Democracy: An Effective Framework (2016)
- Recent Extremist Violence in Bangladesh: Response Options (2016)
- 25 March — Gonohottya Dibosh (Genocide Day) (2017)
- Reconciling Divided Societies, Building Democracy and Good Governance: Lessons from Sri Lanka (2017)
- Promoting Cultural Diversity of Small Ethnic Groups in Bangladesh (2017)
- Upcoming 45th Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of OIC, Dhaka: Revisiting A Shared Journey (2018)
- রোহিঙ্গা সংকটঃ বাংলাদেশ কর্তৃক গ্রহীত পদক্ষেপ ও পর্যালোচনা (Rohingya Crisis: Measures Taken by Bangladesh and Appraisal) (2018)
- Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 (2018)
- Bangladesh in International Peacebuilding: Experience from Japan (2018)
- Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100: Implementation, Challenges and Way Forward (2019)
- 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh (2019)
- Bangladesh-India Cooperation: In the Changing Regional and Global Context (2019)
- Commemorating the Silver Jubilee of Diplomatic Relation Between South Africa and Bangladesh (2019)
- International Day of Peace 2019 and Launching of Book Titled “Bangladesh in International Peacebuilding: Discourses from Japan and Beyond” (2020)
- Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative for the Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh (2020)
- Bangladesh-Nepal Relations: Prospects for Sub-regional Cooperation (2020)
- Bangladesh and India: A Promising Future (2020)
- Track 1.5 BIMSTEC Security Dialogue Forum (2020)
- Bangabandhu's The Unfinished Memoirs: A Review (2020)
- ASEM Day: Celebrating and For Strengthening Connectivity (2020)
- Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Bangladesh: Options for Building Resilience (2020)
- Leadership of Bangabandhu and Its Relevance to the Contemporary World (2021)
- Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: Leadership and Foreign Policy (2021)
- Bangabandhu's Vision of Sonar Bangla: Bangladesh at 50 (2021)
- The Rohingya Crisis: Response of the International Community and the Repatriation Process (2021)
- Revisiting Contemporary Peace and Security Challenges in the South Region (2021)
- Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic of a Nation's Emergence and Emancipation (2021)



- **BIISS Seminar Proceedings**

Exploring Korea-Bangladesh Relations in the Last Five Decades and Beyond (2021)  
The Rohingya Exodus in Bangladesh: Regional and Global Security Implications (2021)  
Bangladesh-South Africa Bilateral Relations: Exploring the Potentials for Future Engagement and Cooperation (2021)  
Geopolitics of Indo-Pacific and Reconnecting the Bay of Bengal Littorals (2022)  
Human Rights in the 21st Century: Rhetoric and Reality (2022)  
Roundtable Discussion with H.E. Michele J. Sison, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, US Department of State and Her Delegation (2022)  
Bangladesh and the United States Relations: Moving Towards Enhanced Cooperation and Partnership (2022)  
Hybrid Seminar on Blue Economy and Maritime Security: Bangladesh Perspective (2022)  
Bangladesh-India Relations: Confluence of Ideologies and Evolving Perspectives (2022)  
The EU in the Indo-Pacific: A Committed Partner for Stability, Prosperity and Peace (2022)  
Bangabandhu's Vision: Relevance in the Context of 21st Century (2022)  
Climate Diplomacy: Constraints and Choices for Bangladesh (2022)  
Bangladesh-Portugal Relations Quest for Deeper Bilateral Cooperation (2022)  
Changing Global Order Securing Bangladesh's National Interest (2022)  
New Frontiers of Human Rights Climate Justice in Perspective (2022)  
Hybrid Seminar on Look Africa: Exploring New Horizons for Bangladesh (2022)  
Hybrid Seminar on Promoting Multilateral Cooperation to Prevent Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling (2022)  
BIISS Research Colloquium 2022 (2022)  
Celebrating 50 Years of Bangladesh-Nepal Friendship: Shared Vision of Peace, Progress and Prosperity (2023)  
Roundtable Discussion with Senior Director Eileen Laubacher, Senior Director for South Asia, United States National Security Council (USNSC) (2023)  
Seminar on Gig Economy and Bangladesh: Opportunities, Challenges and Way Forward (2023)  
Evolving Strategic Scenario in the Bay of Bengal Region: Bangladesh Perspective (2023)  
Seminar on Contemporary Bangladesh: Security and Economic Perspectives (2023)  
International Seminar on Bangladesh's Indo-Pacific Outlook: Opportunities and Way Forward (2023)  
Roundtable Discussion on Bangladesh's Strategic Autonomy: Participation in International/Regional Organisations including BRICS (2024)

- **BIISS Country Lecture Series**

**BIISS Country Lecture Series: Part- 1**

**BIISS Country Lecture Series: Part- 2**







Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) is an autonomous statutory institution established in 1978 by the Government of Bangladesh. The main responsibilities of the Institute are to undertake study, research, and dissemination of knowledge on international relations as well as national affairs and state policy related to security, defence, foreign relations, international peace, security, and strategic aspects.

The priority areas of the Institute's research activities are: foreign policy, security and strategic issues with specific relevance for Bangladesh; regional, inter-regional and international cooperation; conflict studies, peace keeping, disarmament, non-proliferation and area studies. Contemporary issues of global and South Asian security are also the focus of research activities of the Institute.

The Institute provides necessary assistance as per the demand of the Government in the formulation of projects and policies of related matters and their implementations. The Institute also establishes working forum for acquiring further knowledge of relevant national and international issues and policies, and facilitating exchange of knowledge and views between officials engaged in the work of the Government. To fulfil its objective of knowledge generation, the Institute carries out exchange of information, opinions, and materials with other institutions and scholars engaged in research in the country and abroad on the above-mentioned subject areas. The Institute also acts as an archive for the study and research on international affairs and strategic studies.

The general guidance and superintendence of the Institute's affairs are vested upon the Board of Governors, headed by a Chairman and consisting of representatives of government ministries, armed forces, academics and professionals. The Director General, the Chief Executive of the Institute, is also the Member-Secretary of the Board. Research activities of the Institute are carried out by the Research Faculty consisting of a team of full-time researchers with varied social sciences background.

### **Mailing Address**

1/46, Old Elephant Road (West of Ramna Police Station), Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.

Fax: 88-02-48312625, [info@biiss.org](mailto:info@biiss.org), website: [www.biiss.org](http://www.biiss.org)