

RETHINKING
POLITICS

RETHINKING
ECONOMY

RETHINKING
GEO-POLITICS



Bengal Delta Conference

2025

BANGLADESH AT THE CROSSROADS

*Bengal Delta
Conference*
2025

BANGLADESH AT THE CROSSROADS

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

As Bangladesh enters one of the most significant periods of transformation in its history, driven by the July Revolution which marks a pivotal turning point, this moment reflects the emergence of a new political consciousness with the potential to decisively shape the country's future state building process. In response to this historic shift, the Dacca Institute of Research and Analytics (daira) is convening the Bengal Delta Conference 2025 under the theme: "Bangladesh at the Crossroads: Rethinking Politics, Economy, and Geopolitical Strategy.

The conference convenes leading academics, policy experts, civil society representatives, and political stakeholders to critically examine the prevailing circumstances. This represents a pivotal moment for Bangladesh to reconstruct its political framework grounded in democratic values and supported by functional institutions that uphold accountability, transparency, and meaningful participation of people in governance.

Given the urgency of the moment, the Bengal Delta Conference 2025 will address how Bangladesh can facilitate a democratic transition by strengthening the political community and fostering new political possibilities. This effort forms part of the conference's broader commitment to the theme of Rethinking Politics. In the context of an economy shaped by both global transformations and local challenges, the conference will also engage with the theme of Rethinking Economy by examining how principles of fairness can guide institutional accountability, economic redistribution, labor rights, and social protection. In parallel, the accelerating role of technology, artificial intelligence, and the digital sphere will be a key area of focus examining how these forces are reshaping governance, employment, and public life in Bangladesh.

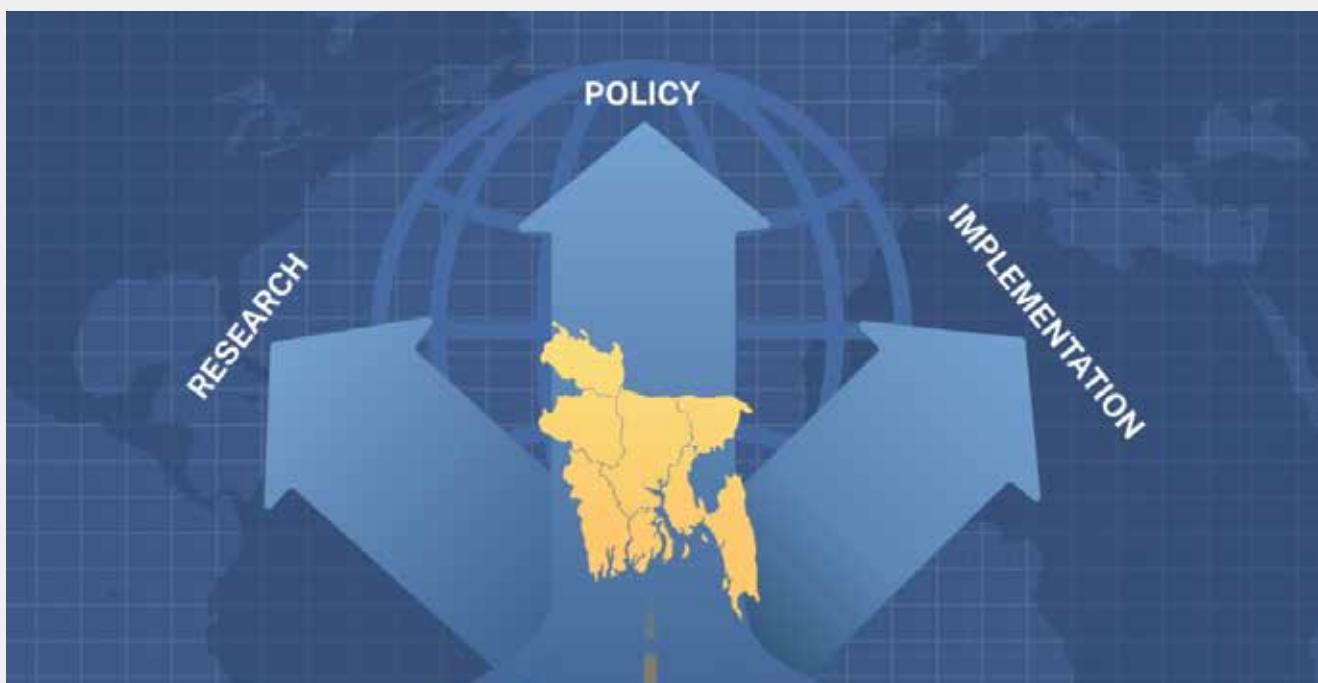
In light of evolving geopolitical realities, the Bengal Delta Conference, under the theme of Rethinking Geopolitical Strategy, aims to reimagine Bangladesh's role as a proactive and capable actor in shaping regional and global engagement. It recognizes the Bay of Bengal as a strategic frontier central to debates on maritime sovereignty, economic connectivity, and geopolitical competition. Accordingly, revisiting regional connectivity and alliance-building across South and Southeast Asia becomes increasingly urgent. As Bangladesh undergoes significant national transformations, the unresolved Rohingya refugee crisis will be reassessed with renewed urgency as a critical test of the country's moral leadership, regional stability, and commitment to human dignity.

ABOUT DAIRA

The Dacca Institute of Research and Analytics (daira) is an emerging Bangladesh-based research institution dedicated to advancing academic research in the fields of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. The role of this institution is to engage academic research with policy and its implementation, centering on Bangladesh, and contributing to both local and global perspectives. The scopes of Policy areas are:

1. Public Policy
2. Foreign Affairs and Security
3. Political Economy

Specifically, the Public Policy focuses on a range of topics, including Governance, Public Health, Education and Institutions, Agriculture, and Food Policy. The Foreign Affairs and Security works on specific areas such as Foreign Policy, Border Security, Defense, and Cyber Security. Political Economy covers a broader scope, addressing topics such as Business, Trade and Regional Cooperation, the Blue Economy, Sustainable Development, Power and Energy, Technology Innovation, and Financial and Monetary Policy.

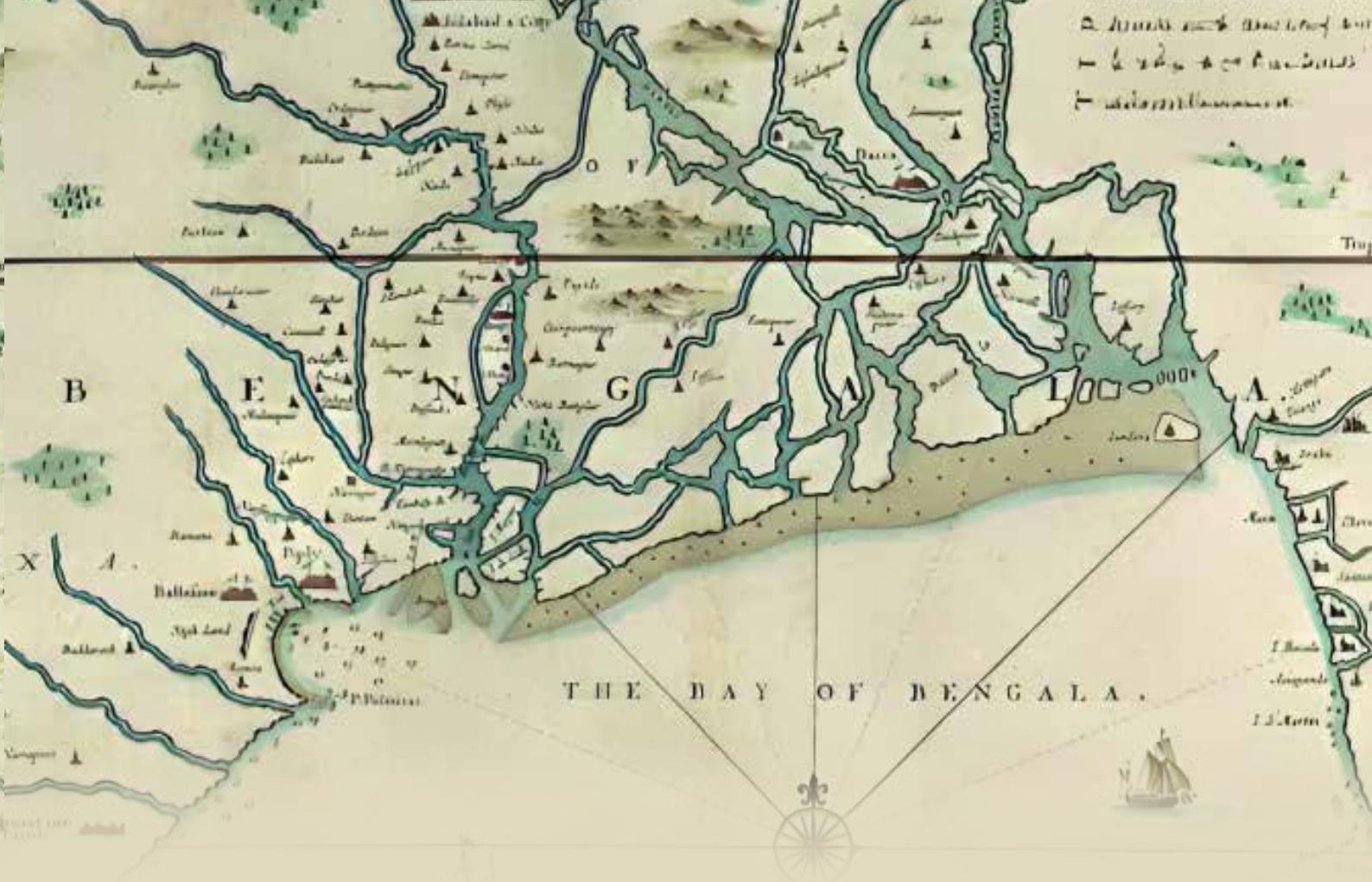


SCHEDULE OF THE CONFERENCE
DAY 1- FRIDAY, AUGUST 29, 2025

Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom	Venue: Modhumati
8.30 AM - 8.50 AM	Reporting
9:00 AM – 10:30 AM	Opening Session
10: 30 AM – 10:45 AM	Tea Break
10:50 AM – 11:50 AM	The Bengal Delta's Riverine Landscape: The July Revolution and Reconstructive Political Order
12:00 PM – 1:15 PM	Economic Strategies and Political Settlements: Current Economic Challenges and Ways Forward
1: 15 PM – 2: 10 PM	Lunch Break
2: 15 PM – 2: 30 PM	The Philosophy of a Second Independence: Bangladesh's July Revolution and the Crisis off the Neoliberal Order
2:35 PM – 3:35 PM	Reform and Reality: Bangladesh's Changing Political Landscape
3: 35 PM –3: 50 PM	The Political Implications of India-Bangladesh Relations: From Liberation War to July Uprising
3:55 PM – 5.00 PM	Policy Priorities in Restructuring the Economy: Diagnostics, Remedies, and Challenges
5: 05 PM – 5: 20 PM	Statelessness and Sovereignty: A Critical Analysis of Citizenship Denial in South Asia
5: 20 PM – 5.30 PM	Tea Break
5: 35 PM – 5: 50 PM	Who is a Muslim? Literary Constructions of Muslim Identity in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia
5:55 PM – 7:00 PM	July Revolution: Critical Juncture or another Historical Loop
	Media, Rumor, and Narratives: Post-July Bangladesh in the South Asian Frame. (2:15 PM - 3:00 PM)
	Human Capital and Job Creation: Navigating the Demand Side and Supply Side Challenges (3:15 PM -415 PM)
	Bay of Bengal: Connectivity, Resilience, and Security (4:25 PM - 5:20 PM)
	Energy Transition, Industrial Expansion and National Security: Analyzing the Nature of Problems and Devising Actionable Solutions (5:55 PM - 7:00 PM)

SCHEDULE OF THE CONFERENCE
DAY 2- SATURDAY, AUGUST 30, 2025

Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom	Venue: Ruby, Pearl
9.00 AM – 10:15 AM	Paper Presentation
10: 00 AM – 10: 20 AM	Islamophobia Before and after 9/11: Implications in South Asian Governmentality
10.30 AM – 11.45 AM	History, Memory, and Politics in South Asia: A Journey from Partition to the Age of Anger
11:45 AM – 12:00 PM	Tea Break
12: 00 PM – 12: 15 AM	Turkey's Asia Policy in Post-Western World
12:20 PM – 1.20 PM	Rohingya Refugee Crisis: Regional Security Risks, Repatriation Pathways, and Livelihood Challenges
1:20 PM – 2:00 PM	Lunch Break
2: 00 PM – 2: 15 PM	Digital Bangladesh": Achievements, Risks, and Future Innovation: Learnings for Technological Diffusion in Bangladesh
2:20 PM – 3:20 PM	Authoritarianism, Atrocity, and Accountability: Human Rights Abuses and Transitional Justice in Bangladesh
3: 25 PM – 3:40 PM	Strategic Partnerships and Global Governance: How Bangladesh Can Collaborate with Chinese Strategic Policies
3:40 PM – 4:00 PM	Tea Break
4:00 PM – 5.10 PM	Cross-Country Experience: Uprising and the Aftermath
5: 15 PM – 5:30 PM	How Can Business Drive Inclusive Growth in the New Bangladesh
5:35 PM – 6.50 PM	From Confluence to Cohesion: Bangladesh's Role in Regional Formation Across Asia
	Modernity Religion (12:00 PM - 1:20 PM)
	New Political Dialogue: Political Party Formation and Finance (2:00 PM- 3:30 PM)



INAUGURAL SESSION

CHIEF GUEST *Md. Touhid Hossain*

Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

OPENING REMARKS *Dr. Mushtaq Khan*

Professor of Economics, SOAS University of London

SPECIAL GUESTS

Dr. Dipak Gyawali

Academician
Nepal Academy of Science and Technology
Former Minister of Water Resources, Nepal

Siddharth Varadarajan

Founder-Editor, The Wire

Mahfuz Anam

Editor and publisher, The Daily Star

Prof. Dr. Maszlee bin Malik

Chairman, International Institute of Advanced
Islamic Studies (IAIS)
Former Education Minister, Malaysia

Prof. Niaz Ahmed Khan

Vice Chancellor and Professor, Department of
Development Studies, University of Dhaka

Day 1 | Time: 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM | Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

THE BENGAL DELTA'S RIVERINE LANDSCAPE: THE JULY REVOLUTION AND RECONSTRUCTIVE POLITICAL ORDER

The Bengal Delta is not only a geographical backdrop to political change; but also it is a living architecture that actively organizes power, livelihoods, and vulnerabilities. To understand contemporary transformations in Bangladesh, it is necessary to recognize the delta not as a passive setting but as a structural force that shapes how communities survive, resist, and negotiate authority. The July Revolution of 2024, when viewed through this lens, was not an isolated rupture or aberration. Rather, it was the most recent manifestation of long-running deltaic politics in which shifting rivers, unstable chars, and fragile estuarine frontiers have historically dictated the rhythms of belonging and the conditions of political mobilization.

For centuries, the Bengal Delta has defined the horizons of human possibility. The constant erosion and accretion of land have forced communities to adapt continuously, fostering a culture of resilience but also of contestation. Villages have disappeared into rivers, while new chars have given rise to fresh struggles over land, identity, and authority. Such dynamics have long influenced how people imagine their place in society and when they are willing to take risks in public life. The riverine environment, therefore, must be treated as a structure in its own right—one that organizes livelihoods, constrains state authority, and generates the conditions under which collective action emerges.

Environmental histories of Bengal reinforce this argument. Patterns of prosperity and decline, episodes of famine and contention, even the eruption of communal conflict, all acquire clearer meaning when ecology is placed at the center of analysis alongside coercion, markets, and culture. The July Revolution, when reinterpreted within this framework, becomes part of a much deeper continuum where ecological forces and political struggles have always been entangled. What appeared as a sudden political uprising in 2024 was, in reality, shaped by centuries of adaptation to the uncertainties of delta life.

This perspective also highlights how geography and culture are mutually constitutive. The vast river networks and dynamic ecological systems of the delta have long informed not only material survival but also cultural imagination, shaping narratives of identity, resilience, and justice. These same landscapes influence patterns of political mobilization, providing both resources and limitations for the formation of community and the expression of dissent.

By situating the July Revolution within the riverine geography of Bengal, we uncover how environmental and spatial dynamics condition the emergence of political discourses, identities, and power structures. In doing so, we can reimagine governance, sovereignty, and civic participation not as abstract ideals but as practices deeply embedded in ecological realities. The delta, in this sense, is both stage and actor, shaping revolutionary movements and influencing the reconstruction of political order in postcolonial contexts.



PANEL DISCUSSION ON
**THE BENGAL DELTA'S RIVERINE LANDSCAPE:
THE JULY REVOLUTION AND RECONSTRUCTIVE POLITICAL ORDER**

SPEAKERS

Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal ■
(Keynote)

Associate Professor
Universiti Brunei Darussalam

Dr. Alex Taek-Gwang Lee

Professor, Philosophy and Cultural Studies;
Director of the Centre for Technology in
Humanities, Kyung Hee University, Korea

Dr. Irfan Ahmad ■

Professor, School of Humanities and Social
Sciences, Department of Sociology
Ibn Haldun University

Dr. Perween Hasan

(Moderator)
Art Historian and VC
Central Women's University, Dhaka

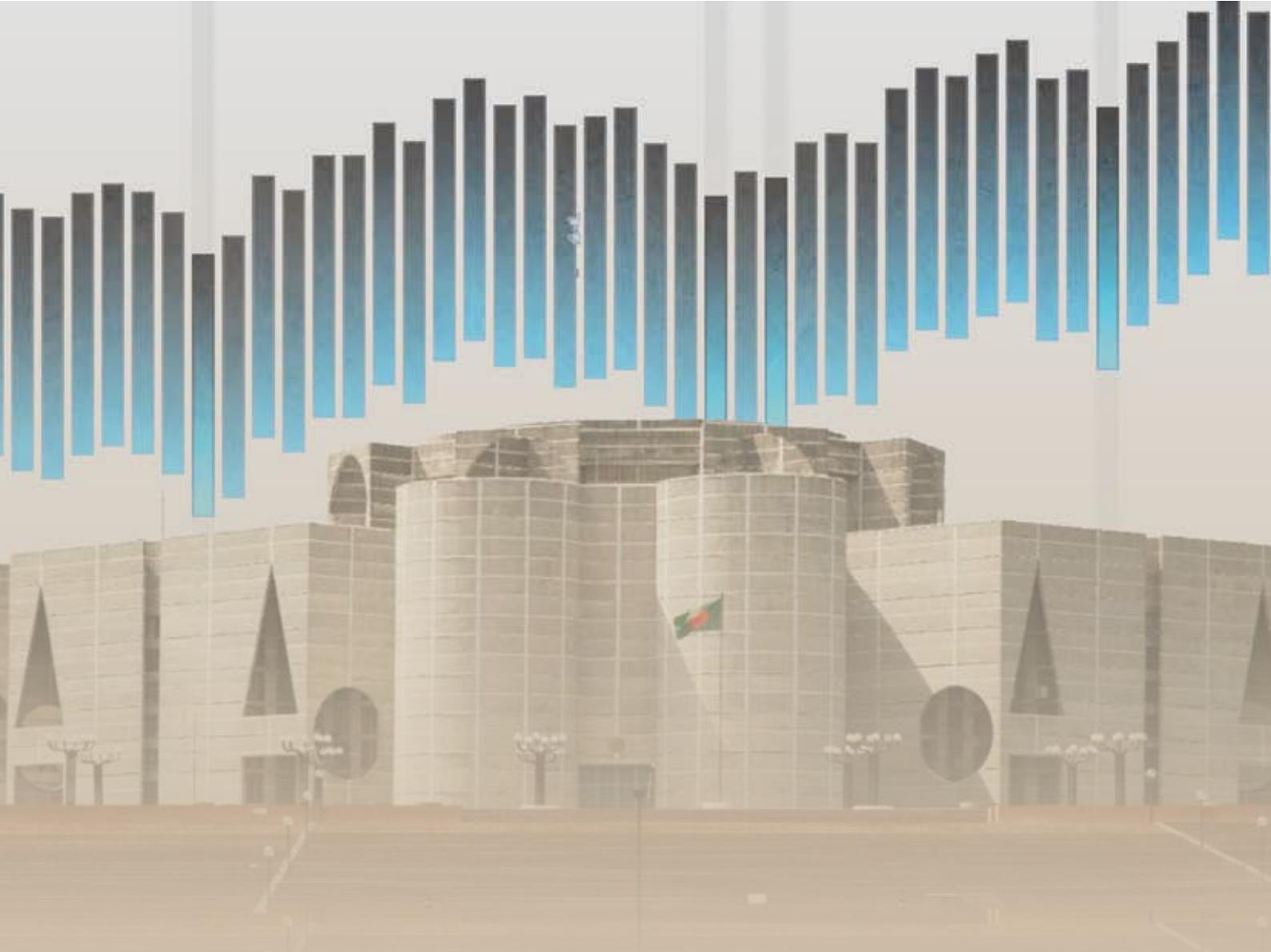
Day 1 | Time: 10:50 AM – 11:50 AM | Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

ECONOMIC STRATEGIES AND POLITICAL SETTLEMENTS: OUR CURRENT ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

The fifteen-year rule of the Awami League (2009–2024) entrenched an authoritarian political settlement in Bangladesh by consolidating power and resources in the hands of ruling elites and their allies. This period sharply contrasted with the preceding decade, which, though marred by corruption, political violence, and contested elections, nonetheless allowed greater political and economic competition. That earlier settlement facilitated economic take-off, particularly through the rise of medium-sized enterprises in garments and textiles. The broader distribution of power enabled the middle sectors of society to exert influence, generating employment and inclusive growth. Manufacturing output outpaced India's on some measures, women's participation expanded, and while corruption persisted, competition prevented the extreme predation that later defined authoritarian rule.

After 2009, the Awami League dismantled political opposition, manipulated three consecutive elections, and eliminated viable challenges. Businesses were compelled to align with the ruling party, which prioritized large projects and oligarchic firms where corruption rents were greatest. The middle sectors lost influence as bank credit, contracts, and land were increasingly monopolized by politically connected conglomerates. These dynamics now define Bangladesh's economic crisis. Crony power contracts drove electricity costs 25% above competitors, projected to rise to 50% if IMF-mandated subsidies are removed, threatening deindustrialization. The banking sector was gutted by oligarchic looting, with non-performing loans at nearly 30% overall and some banks reaching 90%. Bailouts required contradictory monetary policies, locking in high interest rates. Meanwhile, infrastructure corruption inflated logistics costs, while privileges to bureaucrats, police, and military entrenched state corruption.

Addressing these legacies requires a fundamental reorientation of political economy. Inclusive growth must be driven by medium-sized enterprises with international competitiveness, rather than oligarchic monopolies. Governance reforms, especially in health and education, must rapidly improve outcomes. Crucially, political settlement analysis suggests that unless the concentrated power of oligarchs is directly curtailed, standard policy reforms will remain blocked by entrenched interests. Bangladesh's new leadership faces a pivotal choice. Targeted actions—investigating grand corruption, recovering stolen assets, and renegotiating collusive power and infrastructure deals—are essential. Equally important is building SME competitiveness without wasteful subsidies. The 2024 Uprising was an inflection point. If political leaders commit to inclusive reforms, a new settlement can emerge where middle sectors drive growth and governance improves. Failure to act, however, risks prolonging the oligarch-driven model, which no longer satisfies aspirations for jobs, equity, and public services.



PANEL DISCUSSION ON
ECONOMIC STRATEGIES AND POLITICAL SETTLEMENTS:
OUR CURRENT ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

SPEAKERS

Dr. Mushtaq Khan ■
(Keynote)

Professor of Economics
SOAS University of London

■ Prof. Dr. Mahbub Ullah

Economist and Former Chairman
Department of Economics, University of Dhaka

Dr. Selim Raihan ■

Professor, Department of Economics
University of Dhaka
Executive Director, SANEM

■ Dr. Imran Matin

Executive Director, BRAC Institute of
Governance and Development (BIGD)
BRAC University

Nuria Lopez ■

Chairperson
European Union Chamber of Commerce in
Bangladesh

■ M. Zakir Hossain Khan

(Moderator)
Chief Executive, Change Initiative

Day 1 | Time: 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM | Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

REFORM AND REALITY: BANGLADESH'S CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The July Uprising is widely seen as a critical window to rethink Bangladesh's political culture and redesign institutions in ways that could reshape the political order. Over the past year, the Interim Government formed eleven reform commissions that generated diverse proposals. These were later consolidated by a Consensus Commission into 166 recommendations for a new political framework. Through several intense rounds of debate, major political parties negotiated these proposals, and the country now awaits the announcement of a July Charter outlining areas of agreement. Yet key questions remain: was the consensus process genuinely inclusive and effective? And, more importantly, can the reforms promised in the July Charter deliver meaningful and lasting transformation in Bangladesh's politics?

To address these questions, it is necessary to look beyond the immediate crisis of the last sixteen years and examine the deeper roots of Bangladesh's political culture, its institutional trajectory, and the historical performance of democratic governance. Scholars widely agree that although Bangladesh formally transitioned to democracy in 1991, efforts to consolidate that democracy were limited and fragile. Elections during this period were generally competitive, but the intervals between them witnessed all major political parties contributing to the erosion—if not outright dismantling—of core democratic institutions. This produced the entrenchment of a winner-takes-all system in which electoral victory gave the ruling party unchecked access to state resources, distributed through clientelist networks to secure loyalty. Defeated parties, by contrast, were left with no incentives to remain engaged in constructive democratic practice and instead adopted confrontational strategies, awaiting the next electoral cycle as their route back to power. Over time, this dynamic fostered a political culture rooted in polarization, centralization of authority, and the weakening of oversight institutions.

These tendencies reached their zenith over the last sixteen years, when Bangladesh shifted from an electoral—at best illiberal—democracy into a hegemonic authoritarian order. Against this backdrop, the panel will explore three interrelated themes.

1. The historical fault lines of Bangladeshi politics and the ways in which these shaped the democratic crisis;
2. The interaction between electoral competition, money politics, clientelist networks, and cultural dynamics in sustaining this trajectory; and
3. The prospects of the proposed reforms—whether, and to what extent, the July Charter can introduce fundamental and sustainable changes in the political structure.



PANEL DISCUSSION ON REFORM AND REALITY: BANGLADESH'S CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

SPEAKERS

Dr. David Jackman ■

Departmental Lecturer in Development Studies,
University of Oxford

■ Mahdi Amin

Advisor to the Chairperson
Bangladesh Nationalist Party - BNP

Tasnim Jara ■

Joint Convener, NCP

■ Dr. Asif Shahar

(Keynote & Moderator)
Professor, Department of Development Studies,
University of Dhaka

Day 1 | Time: 2:30 PM- 3:30 PM | Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

POLICY PRIORITIES IN RESTRUCTURING THE ECONOMY: DIAGNOSTICS, REMEDIES, AND CHALLENGES

As Bangladesh stands at a historic crossroads in the aftermath of the July Revolution, the restructuring of its economy has become central to the nation's broader political, social, and institutional transformation. The Bengal Delta Conference 2025 provides a timely platform to reflect on these imperatives, situating Bangladesh's economic future within the shifting realities of regional integration and global change. What is at stake is not merely the rate of economic growth, but the possibility of linking prosperity with justice—ensuring that the gains of development are widely and equitably shared across society.

Restructuring the economy requires balancing domestic priorities with global transformations. The developmental experience of East Asia offers important lessons, particularly its four growth pillars: export orientation, human capital investment, industrial upgrading, and effective state intervention. For Bangladesh, this translates into moving beyond dependence on the garment sector to diversify into pharmaceuticals, information technology, renewable energy, agro-processing, and other knowledge-driven industries. Diversification will be critical for building resilience against global supply chain disruptions, external shocks, and climate vulnerabilities that uniquely threaten the deltaic environment.

Equally important is sustained investment in human capital. With nearly two-thirds of the population under 35, Bangladesh's demographic dividend can only be realized through robust education reform, vocational training, and digital literacy. These are not only productivity-enhancing tools but also mechanisms of social inclusion that can reduce inequality, empower women, and expand opportunities for marginalized groups. Industrial upgrading must proceed hand in hand with technological adaptation, anchored in transparent and effective institutions capable of fostering competitiveness while resisting capture by oligarchic interests.

At the heart of this challenge lies employment generation. The capacity to absorb a youthful and rapidly expanding labor force will determine the sustainability of economic growth and, by extension, the legitimacy of democratic reform. Without meaningful job creation, the optimism unleashed by the July Revolution risks fading into frustration.

This session will therefore critically examine Bangladesh's economic diagnostics, explore remedies for sustainable and inclusive restructuring, and identify long-term challenges in designing a fair and future-ready economy. By connecting local realities with global lessons, the discussion seeks to chart how Bangladesh can reimagine economic governance to align prosperity with justice, resilience, and democratic renewal in the post-revolution era.



PANEL DISCUSSION ON POLICY PRIORITIES IN RESTRUCTURING THE ECONOMY: DIAGNOSTICS AND REMEDIES

SPEAKERS

Dr. Md. Deen Islam ■
(Keynote)

Associate Professor
Department of Economics, University of Dhaka

■ **Dr. A. K. Enamul Haque**

Director General, Bangladesh Institute of
Development Studies (BIDS)

Dr. Ananya Raihan ■
Member, Labour Reform Commission &
Chairperson, iSocial

Dr. Sayema Haque Bidisha ■
(Moderator)

Pro-Vice Chancellor (Administration)
and Professor, Department of Economics,
University of Dhaka

■ **Dr. Jyoti Rahman**

Macroeconomist
Director - International Policy,
Sydney Policy Analysis Centre

Day 1 | Time: 3:55 PM – 5:00 PM | Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

JULY REVOLUTION: CRITICAL JUNCTURE OR ANOTHER HISTORICAL LOOP

The political history of Bangladesh has been written in blood and marked by repeated failures of governance. Long before the nation's birth, the people of this land endured political subjugation under colonial India. The partition of Bengal in the early 20th century marked a decisive turn toward identity politics, as Bengalis struggled for recognition and rights—a struggle that eventually led to the creation of Pakistan. Yet in Pakistan, power was quickly weaponized against them: their political and economic rights were denied, their culture attacked, and the majority reduced to second-class citizens. Resistance flared repeatedly, from street protests to uprisings, culminating in the downfall of General Ayub Khan. Independence came in 1971 through a bloody war, but the people's fate changed little.

Soon after, betrayal followed. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—Bangabandhu of the 1969 mass uprising—turned increasingly despotic. He imposed a dysfunctional constitution, silenced dissent, banned parties, and entrenched a corrupt bureaucracy. His assassination in August 1975 triggered coups and countercoups, ending with the Sepoy-People's Uprising of November 7 and the rise of General Ziaur Rahman. Though a military ruler, Zia restored stability and opened space for democracy, but he too was assassinated in 1981. General Ershad followed—another autocrat—until the mass uprising of 1990 restored electoral democracy.

Hope returned, but successive BNP and Awami League governments failed to govern justly, manipulating institutions to entrench their rule. After BNP tampered with the Election Commission, an unelected regime briefly intervened. In 2008, the Awami League returned under Sheikh Hasina, ushering in a darker era of authoritarianism. Constitutional changes tightened her grip, the elections of 2014, 2018, and 2024 were discredited, and her rule became defined by extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, corruption, mass imprisonment, and systematic assaults on freedom of expression.

In 2024, a student quota movement at Dhaka University spread nationwide. Hasina's response was brutal: thousands were killed, yet the people fought back. On 5 August 2024, she fled—toppled by the largest mass uprising in the nation's history. An interim government led by Professor Muhammad Yunus assumed power, pledging to restore democracy and reform institutions.

One year on, daunting challenges remain: dismantling the old regime's machinery, prosecuting crimes, stabilizing the economy, rebuilding trust, and securing fair elections. The July Revolution momentarily united the nation, igniting hope of a new dawn. Yet uncertainty endures: is this truly a turning point—or another loop in Bangladesh's tragic cycle.



PANEL DISCUSSION ON JULY REVOLUTION: CRITICAL JUNCTURE OR ANOTHER HISTORICAL LOOP

SPEAKERS

Farhad Mazhar

Author & Philosopher

Faruk Wasif

Director General, Press Institute, Bangladesh

Shaheen Anam

Executive Director
Manusher Jonno Foundation

Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal

Associate Professor
Universiti Brunei Darussalam

Dr. Mohammad Azam

(Moderator)
Director General, Bangla Academy;
Professor, Department of Bangla
University of Dhaka

Day 1 | Time: 5:55 PM – 7:00 PM | Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

HISTORY, MEMORY, AND POLITICS IN SOUTH ASIA: A JOURNEY FROM PARTITION TO THE AGE OF ANGER

South Asia stands at a crossroads, caught between its immense potential for stability and growth and the weight of unresolved historical conflicts that continue to shape its present and future. From the traumatic Partition of 1947 to the current rise of polarizing ideologies, the region's history is defined by recurring cycles of identity politics, institutional fragility, and geopolitical rivalries. Despite being home to one-fourth of the world's population, South Asia has yet to resolve fundamental questions of borders, sovereignty, and the grounds of solidarity and common belonging that other regions, such as Europe, have managed to address through dialogue and cooperation. The legacy of colonialism left deep fissures in the political and cultural fabric of the subcontinent. The Bengal Renaissance and the rise of Hindu nationalism brought modern political thought to the forefront but also embedded the seeds of identity politics within the existing economically stratified populace, further complicating the political apparatus.

In contemporary times, India's growing Hindutva-driven politics seeks to assert regional dominance, often sidelining the sovereignty and justice concerns of its neighbors. At the same time, Islam as a modern political phenomenon has gained significant traction in parts of South Asia, particularly in Bangladesh and Pakistan, where weak institutions have failed to provide democratic and accountable alternatives. This political dynamic has also deepened polarization, resulting in a harsh and often violent political reality. Today, South Asia faces an alarming convergence of crises: political polarization among communities, border disputes, refugee flows, and fragile institutions, compounded by global shifts in power and Indo-Pacific geopolitics. Without a constructive framework for dialogue, these tensions threaten to spiral into greater instability, undermining the region's ability to emerge as a cohesive and influential global actor.

This panel will examine the historical arc from Partition to the present, titled the "History, Memory, and Politics in South Asia: A Journey from Partition to the Age of Anger," exploring how collective memory, unresolved identity and economic class questions, and political rhetoric have shaped South Asia's trajectory. The panel aims to interrogate the role of state and non-state actors in perpetuating or resolving identity and class conflicts, the impact of historical grievances on contemporary politics, and the possibilities for building resilient democratic institutions, as well as whether South Asia can move beyond reactive politics to embrace a vision of cooperative stability and a politics of solidarity. By bringing together historians, political scientists, and regional policy experts, this discussion seeks to open a dialogue on the urgent need to reconcile history and memory with the imperatives of peace, justice, and regional solidarity.



PANEL DISCUSSION ON
HISTORY, MEMORY, AND POLITICS IN SOUTH ASIA:
A JOURNEY FROM PARTITION TO THE AGE OF ANGER

SPEAKERS

Dr. Yasmin Saikia ■
(Keynote)

Hardt-Nickachos Chair in Peace Studies
Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict,
Arizona State University

Dr. Sayeed Ferdous

Pro Vice-Chancellor
Bangladesh Open University;
Professor, Department of Anthropology,
Jahangirnagar University

Dr. Maryam Wasif Khan ■

Associate Professor, Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani
School of Humanities and Social Sciences,
Lahore University of Management Sciences

Dr. Soumyabrata Choudhury

Associate Professor
School of Arts and Aesthetics
Jawaharlal Nehru University

Dr. Naveeda Khan ■
(Moderator)

Professor, Department of Anthropology,
Johns Hopkins University

Day 2 | Time: 10:30 AM – 11:45 AM | Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

ROHINGYA REFUGEE CRISIS: REGIONAL SECURITY RISKS, REPATRIATION PATHWAYS, AND LIVELIHOOD CHALLENGES

The protracted displacement of the Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar has created one of the most pressing humanitarian and security challenges in South Asia. What began as an emergency response to a mass influx of people fleeing persecution in Myanmar has evolved into a protracted crisis with profound implications for Bangladesh's economy, security, and social cohesion. While the initial international response in 2017 was swift and substantial, sustaining global attention has proven difficult. Over the last two years, humanitarian funding has declined drastically, leading to severe reductions in essential services. In 2024 alone, several UN agencies reported that livelihood programs and critical support services faced cuts of nearly 70 percent, leaving refugees increasingly vulnerable to poverty, trafficking, and potential radicalization.

Repatriation of the Rohingya remains the stated priority for both Bangladesh and the international community, but progress has been stalled by multiple obstacles. Continued insecurity in Myanmar's Rakhine State, coupled with Myanmar's refusal to guarantee citizenship, dignity, and safety, has made voluntary return unfeasible. Additionally, the absence of coordinated regional diplomacy and limited engagement from major global actors have compounded the stalemate. As other global crises—from the wars in Ukraine and Gaza to refugee challenges in Europe and the Middle East—dominate international attention, the Rohingya issue has steadily slipped from donor priorities. This shift has placed an ever-greater burden on Bangladesh, which continues to shoulder disproportionate responsibility for hosting more than 1.5 million Rohingya refugees.

Against this backdrop, this seminar will provide a timely platform to critically examine the stalled repatriation efforts and to debate practical diplomatic and legal solutions. It will also analyze the consequences of declining humanitarian funding, particularly its devastating impact on livelihoods and human security within the refugee camps. The seminar will bring together policymakers, scholars, humanitarian practitioners, and legal experts to consider options that can break the deadlock—ranging from innovative regional diplomacy and legal accountability measures to strategies for sustaining international attention on the crisis.

Importantly, this seminar precedes the High-level Conference on the Situation of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar, convened by the President of the United Nations General Assembly on 30 September 2025 in New York. The insights and recommendations emerging from this discussion will be developed into a policy paper to inform deliberations at the UN conference, ensuring that the voices and urgent needs of the Rohingya remain central to the international agenda.



PANEL DISCUSSION ON ROHINGYA REFUGEE CRISIS: REGIONAL SECURITY RISKS, REPATRIATION PATHWAYS, AND LIVELIHOOD CHALLENGES

SPEAKERS

Niaz Ahmed Khan

Vice Chancellor and Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka

Dr. Faheem Hussain

Principal Coordinator for SDGs
People Republic of Bangladesh

Michael Kugelman

Senior Fellow, Asia Pacific Foundation

Dr. Emadul Islam

Senior Research Fellow
Ocean Policy Research Institute
The Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Japan

Ambassador (retd) Tariq A Karim

Advisor, Centre for Bay of Bengal Studies,
Independent University of Bangladesh

Shama Ubaed

Organizing Secretary
Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

Day 2 | Time: 12:20 AM – 01:20 AM | Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

AUTHORITARIANISM, ATROCITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY: HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN BANGLADESH

Since its independence in 1971, Bangladesh has pursued a fragile and uneven journey toward democracy, repeatedly disrupted by authoritarian consolidation and institutional decay. The persistence of colonial-era laws, politicized state organs, and weak accountability structures entrenched vulnerabilities for citizens, leaving justice largely inaccessible.

Between 2009 and 2024, the Awami League regime advanced a particularly concentrated form of authoritarianism, intensifying the state's capacity to commit systematic human rights violations. Political opposition was barred from even minimal activity, while state institutions—including the police, RAB, and intelligence agencies—were implicated in enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and secret detention in torture facilities such as the infamous Aynaghar. Brutal tactics like kneecapping were used to disable young activists permanently, and judicial independence was dismantled, producing cases of judicial killings. To legitimize these abuses, the regime instrumentalized liberation war narratives, embedding a culture of fear and normalizing violence.

The July Mass Uprising of 2024 marked the culmination of this necropolitical governance. Lethal force was deployed against unarmed citizens: pellet guns blinded hundreds and maimed thousands, targeted headshots killed more than 80, and over 1,400 civilians were murdered in just twenty days. These atrocities left deep social and psychological wounds and underscored the urgency of transitional justice. Yet accountability remains elusive: perpetrators continue to evade justice, political divisions obstruct unified advocacy, and no structured truth-telling or healing mechanisms have been initiated.

This panel, “Authoritarianism, Atrocity, and Accountability: Human Rights Abuses and Transitional Justice in Bangladesh”, seeks to interrogate the anatomy of systemic violations and chart pathways for justice and reconciliation. It will explore how to systematically document and analyze abuses between 2009 and 2024—examining institutional structures, legal instruments, and narrative strategies—to uncover layered harms and develop a survivor-centered justice agenda. Discussion will assess mechanisms that enabled repression, identify risks of recurrence in the post-uprising transition, and propose early-warning tools and safeguards.

Drawing on international practices and local contexts, the panel will evaluate judicial processes, truth-telling, reparations, and guarantees of non-repetition, while addressing the risks of politicized justice. It will also consider strategies for activists and organizations: documentation, protection, legal action, advocacy, survivor support, and countering disinformation and stigmatizing narratives. Ultimately, the session emphasizes embedding human rights into nation-building, ensuring an inclusive roadmap for accountability, healing, and reconciliation that safeguards dignity and justice for all citizens.



PANEL DISCUSSION ON
AUTHORITARIANISM, ATROCITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY: HUMAN RIGHTS
ABUSES AND TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN BANGLADESH

SPEAKERS

Barrister Sara Hossain ■

Advocate
Supreme Court of Bangladesh

Taqbir Huda ■

Human rights lawyer and Senior Fellow
Tech Global Institute

Huma Khan ■

(Moderator)

Senior Human Rights Adviser, UN Resident
Coordinator's Office, United Nations Bangladesh

Mohammad Tajul Islam ■

Chief Prosecutor
International Crimes Tribunal

Irene Khan ■

Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression
and opinion, United Nations

Day 2 | Time: 2:20 PM – 3:20 PM | Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

CROSS-COUNTRY EXPERIENCE: UPRISING AND THE AFTERMATH

In recent years, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh have each experienced historic political ruptures that reshaped their trajectories. In Nepal, the abolition of the monarchy in 2008 brought an end to centuries of dynastic rule, creating the possibility of a republican and federal democratic order. Sri Lanka witnessed a massive popular uprising in 2022, fueled by economic collapse, corruption, and elite mismanagement, which forced regime change and opened new debates about governance and accountability. In Bangladesh, the July Insurrection of 2024 brought down the entrenched Awami League regime after fifteen years of authoritarian consolidation, igniting hopes of rebuilding democracy and justice.

These momentous events generated widespread expectations of a fresh beginning and raised the possibility of constructing new political orders. Yet, the aftermath in each country has been turbulent. Transitions have been marked by social unrest, political uncertainty, and contested reforms, with the initial revolutionary euphoria often giving way to frustration and disillusionment among citizens. The high hopes of ordinary people, who sought responsive governance, economic relief, and democratic accountability, have frequently clashed with the realities of institutional weakness, elite bargaining, and fragile political settlements.

This panel will examine these ruptures in comparative perspective, reflecting on both their historical roots and their contemporary aftermaths. The discussion will address a number of critical questions:

- What was the dominant crisis driving each rupture—political dysfunction, economic collapse, or a combination of both?
- Did these crises have a long gestation period, rooted in deep structural tensions, or did they erupt suddenly as a response to immediate triggers?
- How did the ruptures unfold—were they predominantly organized and led by established political elites, or were they spontaneous mass movements that allowed new actors to emerge and challenge the old order?
- What has been the nature and dynamics of post-rupture politics in each case, particularly regarding institutional reforms, legitimacy, and citizen trust?
- Where do these countries stand today in their pursuit of a stable political order, and what futures beckon given the regional and global uncertainties?

By drawing on comparative insights from Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, the panel seeks to illuminate the promises and pitfalls of revolutionary transitions, offering lessons for building resilient political orders in South Asia.



PANEL DISCUSSION ON CROSS-COUNTRY EXPERIENCE: UPRISING AND THE AFTERMATH

SPEAKERS

Mirza M. Hassan, PhD.

Senior Research Fellow and Head of the
Governance and Politics Cluster
BRAC Institute of Governance
and Development (BIGD), Brac University

Mr. Dipak Gyawali

Academician
Nepal Academy of Science and Technology
Former Minister of Water Resources, Nepal

Dr. Rajni Gamage

Research Fellow
Institute of South Asian Studies
National University of Singapore (NUS)

Dr. Alex Taek-Gwang Lee

Professor, Philosophy and Cultural Studies;
Director of the Centre for Technology in
Humanities, Kyung Hee University, Korea

Prof. Dr. Prabha Manuratne

Professor, Department of English
University of Kelaniya, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Dr. Asif Shah

(Moderator)
Professor
Department of Development Studies
University of Dhaka

Day 2 | Time: 4:00 PM – 5:10 PM | Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

FROM CONFLUENCE TO COHESION: BANGLADESH'S ROLE IN REGIONAL FORMATION ACROSS ASIA

Bangladesh's location at the crossroads of South, Southeast, and East Asia gives it a natural advantage as a bridge for regional cooperation. For centuries, the land has been shaped by the interaction of diverse civilizations, thriving trade routes, and shifting political influences, making it a vibrant meeting point for ideas, goods, and people. This unique heritage has fostered a multidimensional political identity and sense of belonging that blend traditional richness with strategic importance. Consequently, in the present geopolitical landscape, Bangladesh's legacy of connectivity positions it to evolve from a space of historical convergence into an active and influential player in building regional cohesion across Asia.

Amid escalating tensions between nuclear powers, Asia faces an increasingly volatile and unstable security environment shaped by asymmetric warfare, drone strikes, cyberattacks, and grey-zone conflicts. These challenges are compounded by the far-reaching impacts of climate change, the refugee crisis, and shifting geopolitical dynamics at the global level. Together, they create a complex web of vulnerabilities that threaten regional stability. Without the establishment of a stable and inclusive framework for regional cooperation and conflict management, these pressures risk intensifying into a deeper, multifaceted crisis that could destabilize Asia's political, economic, and humanitarian landscape for decades to come.

The July Uprising of Bangladesh marks a redefining moment in the regional settlement, signaling the nation's return to active political engagement. In today's interconnected world, Bangladesh holds both the opportunity and the potential to play a central role in shaping Asia's regional formation. This stands as a moment to advocate for a broader framework that builds alliances through collaboration with diverse communities, ethnic groups, as well as political margins across South Asia. Such an approach moves beyond traditional state-centric paradigms, fostering mutual engagement among a variety of cultural, economic, and social groups. In this light, the region's historical legacy of civilizational interactions, particularly those centered on the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, offers a valuable foundation for understanding and addressing contemporary challenges.

The panel discussion titled "From Confluence to Cohesion: Bangladesh's Role in Regional Formation Across Asia" aspires to explore Bangladesh's approach to regional formation in Asia, drawing on its historical position, modes of engagement, and strategic opportunities amid the shifting Indo-Pacific geopolitics centered on the Bay of Bengal.



PANEL DISCUSSION ON FROM CONFLUENCE TO COHESION: BANGLADESH'S ROLE IN REGIONAL FORMATION ACROSS ASIA

SPEAKERS

Michael Kugelman ■
(Keynote)

Senior Fellow, Asia Pacific Foundation

Dr. Amena Mohsin

Professor (Retired)
Department of International Relations
Dhaka University

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Özkan ■

Professor
International Relations at Joint War Institute,
Turkish National Defence University

Dr. Niu Haibin

Associate Research Fellow and Director,
Institute for Foreign Policy Studies; Director,
Center for Latin America Studies, Shanghai
Institutes for International Studies (SIIS)

Prof. Dr. Sreeradha Datta ■

Professor, International Affairs,
O.P. Jindal Global University

Dr. Shahab Enam Khan

(Moderator)
Professor
Department of International Relations,
Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP)

Day 2 | Time: 5:35 PM – 6:50 PM | Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

MEDIA, RUMOR, AND NARRATIVES: POST-JULY BANGLADESH IN THE SOUTH ASIAN FRAME

Under the authoritarian regime in Bangladesh, the media was subjected to extraordinary levels of censorship that not only curtailed freedom of expression but also reduced the press to an extension of state authority. Journalists and media outlets were systematically pressured, silenced, or co-opted, creating an environment where independent voices struggled to survive. Beyond censorship, the regime utilized the media as a tool of state-sponsored propaganda, promoting official narratives and suppressing dissent. This dual function—limiting expression while amplifying authoritarian rhetoric—significantly weakened democratic consolidation and created a political culture where the circulation of truth was subordinated to the interests of those in power.

The overthrow of the regime through a student-led mass uprising marked a historic turning point. Yet the post-authoritarian period has not been free from challenges. Instead of allowing space for democratic discourse to flourish, we have observed the emergence of intense state-sponsored far-right propaganda aimed at delegitimizing Bangladesh's democratic transition. This propaganda has been reinforced by regional and geopolitical interests, which see value in constraining Bangladesh's democratic trajectory. Media platforms have played an instrumental role in this process, frequently amplifying far-right discourses tied to issues such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the National Register of Citizens (NRC), and minority oppression. By framing these debates through exclusionary and sectarian lenses, the media has deepened polarization, undermined inclusive democratic practices, and generated cross-border tensions.

More broadly, the media landscape in South Asia has increasingly contributed to the politics of identity. Rather than fostering pluralism, sections of the press have often intensified communal and nationalist discourses, thereby reinforcing divisions across religious, ethnic, and political lines. This trend has dangerous implications for regional security, particularly as identity-based polarization feeds into interstate hostility. The escalation of such narratives has the potential to exacerbate long-standing rivalries, pushing the subcontinent closer to nuclear confrontation.

Against this backdrop, the Bengal Delta Conference 2025 will dedicate a session to examining the role of the media in shaping political narratives in the aftermath of the July uprising. This discussion will not only analyze how the media environment has influenced democratic transition within Bangladesh but also explore its broader implications for geopolitics, regional security, and foreign relations. By interrogating the media's role in both perpetuating propaganda and influencing identity-based politics, the session aims to highlight the urgent need for new media frameworks that support democratic resilience, foster regional cooperation, and contribute to a more stable and peaceful South Asia.



**INTERACTIVE SESSION ON
MEDIA, RUMOR, AND NARRATIVES:
POST-JULY BANGLADESH IN THE SOUTH ASIAN FRAME**

SPEAKERS

Siddharth Varadarajan ■ **Deepak Kumar Goswami**
Founder-Editor, The Wire Documentary Film Maker

Day 1 | Time: 2:15 PM – 3:00 PM | Venue: Modhumati

HUMAN CAPITAL AND JOB CREATION: NAVIGATING THE DEMAND SIDE AND SUPPLY SIDE CHALLENGES

“Human Capital and Job Creation: Navigating the Demand Side and Supply Side Challenges” is a key session of the Bengal Delta Conference 2025, placed within the broader theme of Rethinking Economy. The discussion will critically assess the state of human capital in Bangladesh, a country where nearly two-thirds of the population is under 35 and where the promise of a demographic dividend remains both a great opportunity and a looming risk. Bangladesh’s education sector continues to face deep structural weaknesses. Despite impressive gains in enrollment, gaps in quality and the limited relevance of skills to industry persist. Curricula remain outdated, vocational training is underdeveloped, and the link between higher education and labor market needs is weak. These mismatches between the supply of labor and the demand of a rapidly changing economy constrain business growth, industrial upgrading, and the ability to fully leverage the nation’s human potential.

In the spirit of the July Revolution, which called for a just, inclusive, and future-ready Bangladesh, this session will focus on strategies to equip the workforce with advanced technical, digital, and problem-solving skills. It will also emphasize the importance of education reforms that prioritize adaptability, creativity, and strong linkages with industry. Particular attention will be given to how Bangladesh can bridge the gap between formal education and employability, ensuring that young people are prepared not only for current opportunities but also for the evolving demands of automation, AI, and the digital economy. By convening academics, policymakers, and private sector leaders, the session aims to generate actionable recommendations for aligning education, training, and job creation. Within the framework of the Bengal Delta Conference 2025, this discussion will contribute directly to pathways for inclusive economic growth, reducing youth unemployment, and ensuring that Bangladesh’s human capital becomes the driving force of long-term prosperity.



SPECIAL SESSION ON HUMAN CAPITAL AND JOB CREATION: NAVIGATING THE DEMAND SIDE AND SUPPLY SIDE CHALLENGES

SPEAKERS

Professor M Niaz Asadullah ■ (Keynote)

Southeast Asia Cluster Lead,
Global Labor Organization;
Senior Fellow, IDEAS, Malaysia;
Adjunct Professor, Chulalongkorn University

■ Prof. Dr. Maszlee bin Malik

Chairman, International Institute of Advanced
Islamic Studies (IAIS)
Former Education Minister, Malaysia

■ Dr. Faheem Hussain

Assistant Professor
School for the Future of Innovation in Society,
Arizona State University

■ Mashrur Arefin

MD & CEO, City Bank Plc;
Chairman,
Association of Bankers Bangladesh Limited (ABB)

■ Dr. Rubaiya Murshed

Assistant Professor
Department of Economics, University of Dhaka

■ Zia Hasan

Economist and Political Analyst

■ Abrar Hossain Sayem

President, Bangladesh Apparel Youth Leaders
Alliance (BAYLA)
Founder & CEO, Merchant Bay Ltd

■ Dr. Asif Shahin

(Moderator)
Professor, Department of Development Studies,
University of Dhaka

Day 1 | Time: 3:15 PM – 4:15 PM | Venue: Modhumati

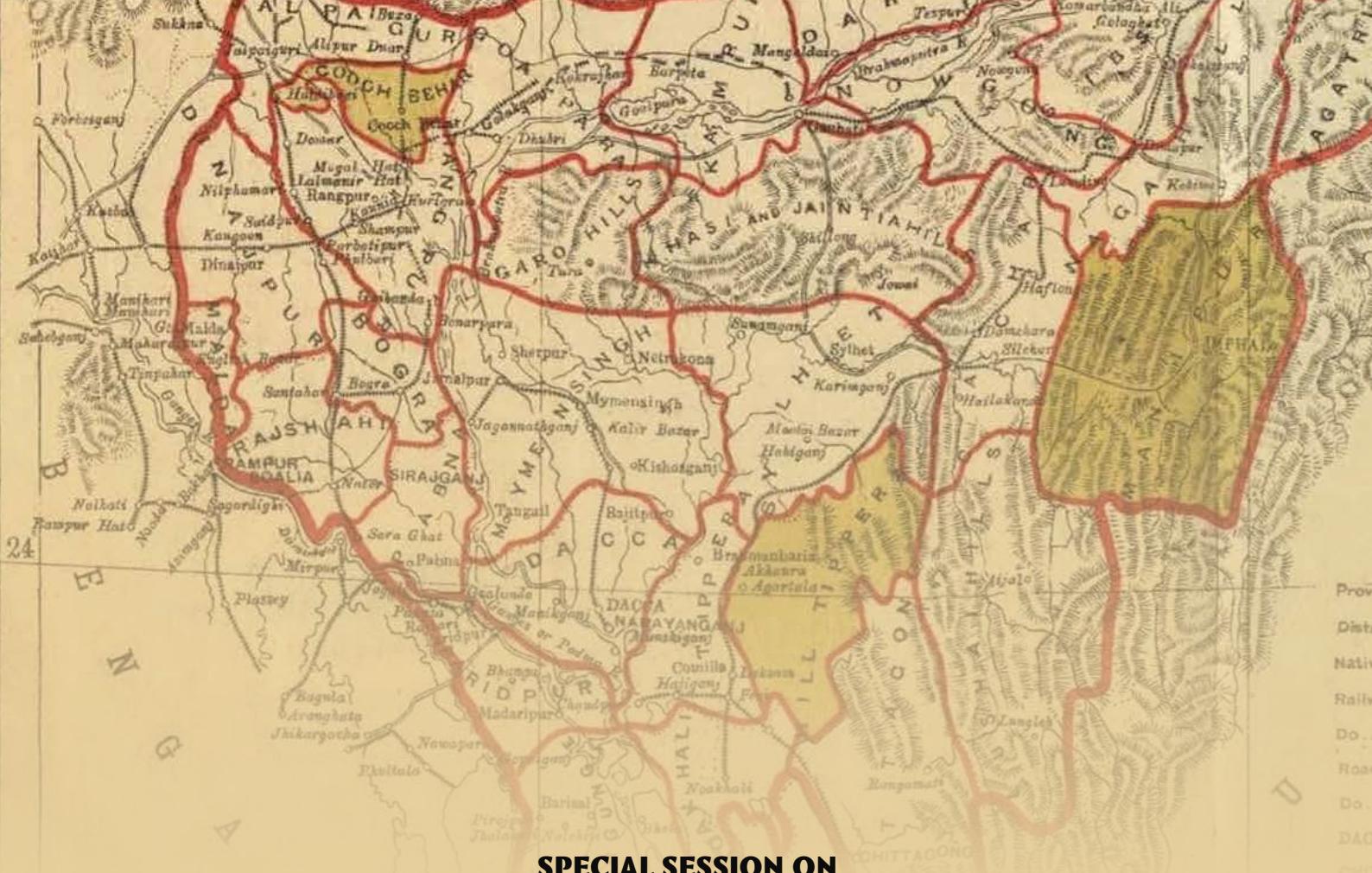
BAY OF BENGAL: CONNECTIVITY, RESILIENCE, AND SECURITY

The Bay of Bengal has long served as a historic confluence of oceans and maritime spaces, shaping networks of trade, cultural exchange, and civilizational encounters. As part of the wider Indian Ocean system, it once stood at the heart of the world's largest trading network before European colonial disruptions, facilitating the mobility of goods, people, and ideas—such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam—across East Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Unlike other maritime regions dominated by single powers, the Bay remained open, cosmopolitan, and plural.

In contemporary times, however, the Bay of Bengal has re-emerged as a critical arena of global political dynamics. Beyond the rivalry of emerging superpowers, the region has become a focal point for competing strategic interests. Littoral states, conscious of their vulnerabilities and opportunities, are increasingly engaging in bilateral and multilateral, regional and sub-regional frameworks to safeguard their national interests in trade, transportation, tourism, energy security, and socio-cultural exchange.

From a geopolitical perspective, the Bay of Bengal is indispensable: nearly one-fourth of the world's population resides in its littoral countries, making its stability vital for global peace and prosperity. Yet the security environment has grown complex and multidimensional, marked by both traditional and non-traditional threats. Traditional challenges include the India–China rivalry, reciprocal naval exercises, and U.S.–China power projection, all of which risk destabilizing regional security.

The session will explore the Bay of Bengal as both a historical and contemporary hub of connectivity, highlighting its role in facilitating trade, cultural exchange, and civilizational encounters across regions. It will examine how strategic competition—particularly the rivalries between India and China, as well as the broader power contestations involving the United States—shapes the security environment of the Bay. The discussion will also focus on how littoral states are pursuing bilateral, multilateral, and sub-regional cooperation to protect their interests in trade, transportation, tourism, energy security, and socio-cultural exchange, while balancing development priorities with the need to prevent conflict. Furthermore, the session will analyze maritime security challenges by distinguishing between traditional threats such as great-power rivalries and naval build-ups, and non-traditional threats including climate change, piracy, human trafficking, and environmental degradation. Finally, the conversation will address how resilience and inclusive regional coordination can contribute to building a durable framework of stability and security in the Bay of Bengal.



SPECIAL SESSION ON BAY OF BENGAL: CONNECTIVITY, RESILIENCE, AND SECURITY

SPEAKERS

Shamarukh Mohiuddin ■ (Keynote)

Director, Cadmus Group and Founder
The Bangladesh Project

Michael Kugelman ■

Director of the South Asia Institute
Wilson Center

Dr. Niu Haibin ■

Associate Research Fellow and Director,
Institute for Foreign Policy Studies; Director,
Center for Latin America Studies, Shanghai
Institutes for International Studies (SIIS)

Dr. M Jashim Uddin ■

Director, Center for Peace Studies (CPS);
Professor of the Department of Political Science
and Sociology, North South University (NSU)

Dr. Marufa Akter ■ (Moderator)

Associate Professor
Department of Global Studies and Governance,
School of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences,
Independent University, Bangladesh

■ Dr. Muhammad Sazzad Hossain Siddiqui

Associate Professor & Chairman
Department of Peace and Conflict Studies

■ Prof. Dr. Mehmet Özkan

Department of International Relations
Joint War Institute
Turkish National Defence University, Turkey

■ Prof. Dr. Sreeradha Datta

Professor
International Affairs
O.P. Jindal Global University

■ Parvez Karim Abbasi

Executive Director
Centre for Governance Studies (CGS)
Assistant Professor
Department of Economics, East West University

Day 1 | Time: 4:25 PM – 5:20 PM | Venue: Modhumati

ENERGY TRANSITION, INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION AND NATIONAL SECURITY: ANALYZING THE NATURE OF PROBLEMS AND DEVISING ACTIONABLE SOLUTIONS

The session titled “Energy Transition, Industrial Expansion and National Security: Analyzing the Nature of Problems and Devising Actionable Solutions” will address one of the most pressing challenges for Bangladesh as it stands at a historic crossroads after the July Revolution. Anchored in the Rethinking Economy and Rethinking Geopolitical Strategy tracks of the Bengal Delta Conference 2025, the discussion explores the critical nexus between energy security, industrial expansion, and national resilience. It argues that unresolved crises—overpriced legacy contracts, opaque procurement processes, and fragmented regulatory frameworks—are undermining competitiveness, deterring investment, and deepening strategic vulnerabilities.

The session seeks to move beyond diagnosis toward policy-oriented solutions. Key priorities include auditing and renegotiating unsustainable contracts; embedding transparency through open data and competitive tendering; establishing an empowered, independent regulator; and introducing cost-reflective tariffs that balance efficiency with targeted protections for SMEs and vulnerable consumers. It will also emphasize the importance of accelerating energy diversification—maximizing gas efficiency, scaling renewables, investing in storage technologies—alongside grid modernization and demand-side efficiency measures.

At the regional level, the session will highlight opportunities for power and energy trading, the creation of strategic reserves, and cooperative mechanisms that anchor the Bay of Bengal as a hub for secure and sustainable energy exchange. Finally, the discussion will outline an integrated “just transition” framework that links clean energy expansion with domestic component manufacturing, skills formation, and clear security-of-supply benchmarks, ensuring that energy transition not only supports industrial upgrading but also strengthens the nation’s broader economic and strategic foundations.



**SPECIAL ROUNDTABLE ON
ENERGY TRANSITION, INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION AND NATIONAL SECURITY:
ANALYZING THE NATURE OF PROBLEMS AND DEVISING ACTIONABLE SOLUTIONS**

SPEAKERS

Dr. Mushtaq Khan ■ ■

Professor of Economics
SOAS University of London

Dr. Sakib Bin Amin ■ ■

Professor, Department of Economics
North South University (NSU)

M. Zakir Hossain Khan ■

Chief Executive, Change Initiative

Day 1 | Time: 5:55 PM – 7:00 PM | Venue: Modhumati

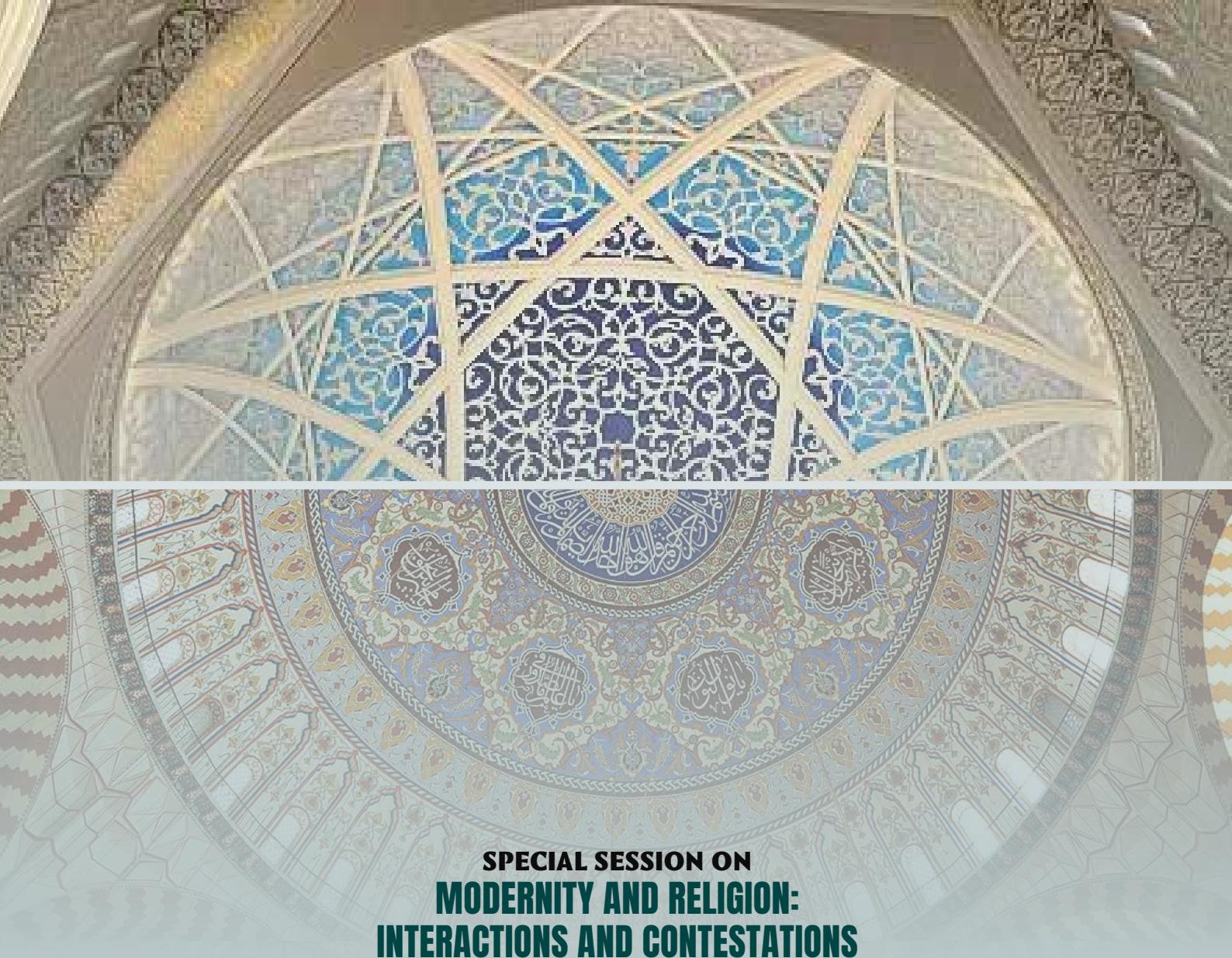
MODERNITY AND RELIGION: INTERACTIONS AND CONTESTATIONS

The relationship between Islam and secularism in Bangladesh has been one of persistent negotiation, tension, and redefinition. In the aftermath of the July Uprising, these debates have acquired renewed urgency, shaping political imaginaries in ways that demand closer scrutiny. Secularism was enshrined in the 1972 Constitution as one of four state principles, but it was neither rooted in broad historical consensus nor central to the rhetoric of the Liberation War. Rather, it emerged from post-independence political settlements shaped by Bengali nationalist aspirations, communal tensions of pre-Partition India, and the authoritarian deployment of Islam during Pakistan's rule.

Over time, secularism evolved into a politicized and often weaponized project, marked by definitional ambiguities, linguistic codifications, and its alignment with global Islamophobia, particularly in the post-9/11 context. State-led secularism has frequently operated as a tool of politico-cultural engineering, producing systemic discrimination against Islamic institutions, actors, and expressions. Under Sheikh Hasina's regime, this agenda intensified, with policies and rhetoric targeting Islamic parties, organizations, and symbols, leading to a visible process of de-Islamization in the public sphere. Yet, Islam as a social and political force has endured, giving rise to resistant subjectivities that blend spiritual yearning, historical memory, and political conviction—neither wholly secular nor strictly Islamic but rooted in both traditions.

Understanding these dynamics requires tracing the historical arc from the Partition of 1947, through the Liberation War of 1971, to subsequent shifts marked by coups, uprisings, and elite bargains. Each phase generated competing visions of national identity, sometimes converging and sometimes colliding, continually reshaping boundaries between religion and modernity. Bangladesh's demographic reality as a Muslim-majority society further complicates the nationalist-secularist narrative of the state.

This session will examine how Islam–secularism tensions define political belonging, institutional design, and civic imagination in Bangladesh. It will explore how global currents of Islamophobia intersect with local identity politics, and whether the July Uprising has generated new political subjectivities that reconcile or depart from both traditions. Key questions include whether de-Islamization is primarily a product of global geopolitics or domestic settlements, and how language, translation, and narrative sustain or unsettle binaries of “good” versus “bad” religion or secularism. Finally, the session will address how collective memories of Partition, Liberation, and political violence continue to inform contemporary negotiations over identity, ideology, and belonging in South Asia.



SPECIAL SESSION ON MODERNITY AND RELIGION: INTERACTIONS AND CONTESTATIONS

SPEAKERS

Prof. Dr. Maszlee bin Malik ■

Chairman, International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS); Former Education Minister, Malaysia

Dr. Maryam Wasif Khan ■

Associate Professor, Mushtaq Ahmad Gurmani School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Lahore University of Management Sciences

Dr. Alex Taek-Gwang Lee ■

Professor, Philosophy and Cultural Studies; Director of the Centre for Technology in Humanities, Kyung Hee University, Korea

Dr. Shafi Md. Mostafa ■ (Moderator)

Associate Professor
World Religions and Culture, University of Dhaka

■ Dr. Irfan Ahmad

Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Sociology, Ibn Haldun University

■ Dr. Yasmin Saikia

Hardt-Nickachos Chair in Peace Studies Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, Arizona State University

■ Dr. Sayed Nizar

Professor, Dept. of Philosophy
Jahangirnagar University

Day 2 | Time: 12:00 PM – 1:20 PM | Venue: Ruby

NEW POLITICAL DIALOGUE: TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH ASIAN POLITICS

Political parties constitute the backbone of democratic systems, structuring political competition, aggregating citizen interests, and shaping mechanisms of accountability. In Bangladesh's present transitional moment, questions surrounding party formation and finance acquire renewed urgency. Historically, parties have been forged through nationalist movements, elite bargains, and ideological struggles. However, contemporary dynamics—marked by youth mobilization, social movements, and digital platforms—demand organizational models that are more participatory, networked, and responsive. The durability of democratic consolidation will depend on whether emerging parties can institutionalize these evolving expectations.

Equally salient is the issue of political finance. Decades of entrenched rent-seeking have distorted party–society relations, intensifying elite capture and patronage. Newly formed parties, while carrying the burden of overcoming structural capital gaps, simultaneously face heightened public expectations for transparency. The challenge lies in reconciling resource mobilization with accountability. Comparative evidence underscores that opaque financing perpetuates clientelism and distrust, whereas systems grounded in disclosure, small-donor participation, and regulation enhance legitimacy and inclusiveness. This dialogue brings together a wide spectrum of political actors and governance specialists. Their exchange is not merely diagnostic but generative—opening space to rethink the institutional design of parties and finance. At stake is the reimaging of Bangladesh's democratic architecture.



SPECIAL SESSION ON NEW POLITICAL DIALOGUE: TRANSFORMATION IN SOUTH ASIAN POLITICS

SPEAKERS

Mir Nadia Nivin ■

Governance, Institutional Reform and
Digital Transformations Specialist

Dr. Rajni Gamage

Research Fellow
Institute of South Asian Studies
National University of Singapore (NUS)

Dr. Taiabur Rahman ■

Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Dhaka

Harindra B. Dassanayake

Researcher and Policy Analyst, Muragala Centre
for Progressive Politics and Policy

Dr. Mirza M. Hassan ■

Advisor, Governance and Politics cluster
BRAC Institute of Governance and
Development (BIGD), BRAC University

Dr. Badiul Alam Majumdar

Member, National Consensus Committee

Barrister Asaduzzaman Fuaad

Joint Member Secretary, AB Party

Zafar Sobhan ■

(Moderator)

Founder and Editor of the Dhaka Tribune

Oliur Rahman Sun

Lecturer, Department of English & Humanities
University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

Dr. Bulbul Siddiqi

Professor, Department of Political Science and
Sociology and the Director of the Confucius
Institute at NSU

Day 2 | Time: 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM | Venue: Ruby

GUEST INTERVENTIONS

Dr. Alex Taek-Gwang Lee

*Title: The Philosophy of a Second Independence:
Bangladesh's July Revolution and the Crisis of the Neoliberal Order*
Day 1; Time: 2:15 PM – 2:30 PM; Vanue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

Prof. Dr. Sreeradha Datta

*Title: The Political Implications of India-Bangladesh Relations:
From Liberation War to July Uprising*
Day 1; Time: 3:35 PM – 3:50 PM; Vanue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

Dr. Soumyabrata Choudhury

Title: Statelessness and Sovereignty: A Critical Analysis of Citizenship Denial in South Asia
Day 1; Time: 5:05 – 5:20 PM; Vanue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

Dr. Maryam Wasif Khan

Title: Who is a Muslim? Literary Constructions of Muslim Identity in Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia
Day 1; Time: 5:35 PM – 5:50 PM; Vanue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

Dr. Irfan Ahmad

Title: Islamophobia Before and after 9/11: Implications in South Asian Governmentality
Day 2; Time: 10:00 – 10:20 AM; Vanue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

Prof. Dr. Mehmet Özkan

Title: Turkiye's Asia Policy in Post-Western World
Day 2; Time: 12:00 PM – 12:15 PM; Vanue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

Dr. Faheem Hussain

Title: Digital Bangladesh": Achievements, Risks, and Future Innovation: Learnings for Technological Diffusion in Bangladesh
Day 2; Time: 2:00 PM – 2:15 PM; Vanue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

Dr. Niu Haibin

*Title: Strategic Partnerships and Global Governance:
How Bangladesh Can Collaborate with Chinese Strategic Policies*
Day 2; Time: 3:25 PM – 3:40 PM; Vanue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

Shamarukh Mohiuddin

Title: How Can Business Drive Inclusive Growth in the New Bangladesh
Day 2; Time: 5:15 PM – 5:30 PM; Vanue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom

Paper Presentation Sessions

30 August, 2025 (Day 2)

Theme: Revisiting the July Uprising: Gen-Z- Led Civil Resistance in Bangladesh

Venue: Ruby, Ground Floor, Hotel InterContinental, Dhaka

Time: 9:00 AM - 10:15 AM

About the Session:

This panel discussion will explore what made the July Uprising, the largest pro-democracy movement in Bangladesh since the 1990s, unique, highlighting how women's spontaneous participation and frontline leadership, together with the political awakening of a generation once thought to be apolitical, transformed the character of resistance against authoritarianism. Misinformation and disinformation also complicated the social media discourse during the Uprising. Through cultural and visual forms such as memes and graffiti art, Bangladeshi youth reimagined political expression, which had a transforming effect on their struggle against authoritarianism in the streets.

Paper Title	Presenters
Political Reimagining of Japanese Pop Culture: Analyzing Graffiti Art During July Uprising of Bangladesh	Md. Reazul Hossain , Student, Department of Television, Film and Photography, University of Dhaka
Memes, Martyrs, and Motherland: Decoding Bangladesh's July Revolution through the Lens of Metamodernism	Md. Abrar Hossain , Student, University of Dhaka
Truth under Siege: A Content Analysis of Misinformation and Disinformation During the July Uprising in Bangladesh	Roman Uddin Research Associate, Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) Kazi Nishat Aunjam Postgraduate Student, University of Dhaka
Women's Participation in Revolution and Post-revolution Building: A Case Study on July-August Uprising	Rebah Tasnia Jaman , Student, Department of World Religion and Culture, University of Dhaka

Theme: Bangladesh in Transition: Examining the Challenges of Rebuilding Governance and National Resilience

Venue: Pearl, Ground Floor, Hotel InterContinental, Dhaka

Time: 9:00 AM - 10:15 AM

About the Session:

This Panel Discussion will explore the multiple pressures and possibilities shaping Bangladesh's future in this time of transition after the 2024 Uprising. The discussion will center on questions of cross-border identity, the role of civil society, great-power rivalry in the Bay of Bengal, and the country's post-LDC economic pathway intersecting with the broader challenges of accountable governance and national resilience. The discussion will address how Bangladesh can navigate these overlapping domestic, regional, and global currents in the difficult years ahead.

Paper Title	Presenters
From Restriction to Partnership? Reconfiguring NGO-State Relationship in Policymaking in Bangladesh in Post-July Bangladesh	Md. Sadiur Rahman , BRAC Institute of Governance and Development, BRAC University
Deciphering Global dynamics in the Bay of Bengal: Bangladesh's Options	Tasnim Jahan Saborno , Student, University of Rajshahi
Inflation and Socioeconomic Challenges in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: Implications for Sustainable Development in Post-LDC Bangladesh	Nusrat Jahan Jothi , MSS Student, Dept. of Public Administration, University of Chittagong Jahedul Islam , MSS Student, Dept. of Economics, University of Chittagong. Md. Amir Hossen , MSS Student, Dept. of Economics, University of Chittagong.
Navigating Post-LDC Economic Transition in Bangladesh: Policy Shifts for Sustainable Growth, Inclusive Development, and Environmental Resilience	Md. Tarek Uddin Nijam : Student, University of Chittagong; Md. Arif Uddin Azad : Officer, Bangladesh Bank.

Theme: Reflections on an Authoritarian Era in Bangladesh

Venue: Ruposhi Bangla Grand Ballroom, Hotel InterContinental, Dhaka

Time: 9:00 AM - 9:50 AM

About the Session:

This Panel Discussion will explore the intersecting forces that paved the way to the July Uprising in Bangladesh, focusing on the surge of political energy through youth mobilization, the media's role in normalizing authoritarianism, and the consolidation of oligarchic power in the financial sector. Together, these perspectives will show how suppressed dissent, manufactured narratives, and oligarchic control over the economy came together to create the volatile conditions that sparked the July Uprising, raising broader questions about state power, accountability, and the future of democracy.

Paper title	Presenters
E= $m_p c_s^2$: Decoding Bangladesh's Political Energy Through a Relativistic Lens	Fatema Hasan Mehejabin ; Student, University of Dhaka
How does the political affiliation of oligarchies influence the incidence of Non-Performing Loans (NPLs) in Bangladesh's banking sector during the regime of the Awami League in the last 16 years?	Md. Hasinur Rahman ; Graduate Student, University of Dhaka Tahsin Rameen , Undergrad Student, University of Dhaka Rashidul Islam , Undergrad Student, University of Dhaka
The Metro Rail Myth: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Developmental Nationalism under the Awami League Regime	Ishrat Jahan Promi ; Lecturer, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Bangladesh University of Professionals Maliha Tabassum ; Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) Jobayer Ahmed ; Lecturer, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Atish Dipankar University of Science and Technology



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