

## SIPG of NSU Hosts the International Conference on 'Rivers of South Asia: Connecting Ecology, People, and Governance'

The South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) at North South University (NSU) organized a two-day (22-23 July 2023) International Conference on '*Rivers of South Asia: Connecting Ecology, People, and Governance*' in collaboration with the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD), and National River Conservation Commission (NRCC), Bangladesh at NSU's Syndicate Hall. The South Asian Network for Public Administration (SANPA) lent its support as an associate partner.



The conference aimed to foster meaningful dialogue among leading scholars, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners. It commenced with an opening ceremony on 22 July 2023, addressed by, among others, Professor Sk. Tawfique M. Haque, Director, SIPG and Chair of NSU's Political Science and Sociology department. Mr. M. A. Mannan, MP, the Hon'ble Minister of the Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh, was the Chief Guest of the inaugural session. Citing Bangladesh as a product of rivers, Mr. Mannan emphasized the significance of collaborative efforts in safeguarding the invaluable water resources of the region.

Dr. Manjur Ahmed Chowdhury, Chairman of Bangladesh's National River Conservation Commission, reiterated that the government is fully committed to naturally flowing rivers, free from occupancy and pollution. "We will soon publish the full list of rivers in the country," he said.

Professor Atiqul Islam, Vice-Chancellor of NSU emphasized using water resources for the benefit of the people in the region. "There is an urgent need for coherent governance and joint actions to ensure the sustainable future of these vital water bodies," he said.

The keynote speech titled "Locating the River between Poetics and Policies: Challenges and Choices" was delivered by Dr. Iftekhar Iqbal, Associate Professor of History and International Studies at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), University Brunei Darussalam (UBD). Dr. Iqbal shed light on the intricate relationship between rivers, their cultural significance, and the policies necessary to balance ecological preservation and human development.

The closing ceremony of the International Conference on 'Rivers of South Asia: Connecting Ecology, People, and Governance' was held on 23 July at North South University in Dhaka, Bangladesh. This significant event served as a vital platform for scholars, policymakers, and experts from various disciplines to engage in interdisciplinary discussions and exchange knowledge, promoting a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities concerning river conservation and management in the South Asian region.

The closing ceremony was graced by the esteemed Chief Guest, Dr. Shamsul Alam, Hon'ble State Minister of the Ministry of Planning, Government of Bangladesh. His presence highlighted the conference's importance in addressing the critical issue of river preservation affecting the region's ecological, social, and economic aspects. Professor M. Ismail Hossain, Pro Vice-Chancellor & Treasurer (in charge) of North South University, chaired the closing session and expressed his appreciation for the collaborative efforts of the organizing committee in bringing together diverse perspectives and expertise.

The conference's closing keynote speech was delivered by Professor Arupjyoti Saikia from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) - Guwahati, India. In his address, Professor Saikia emphasized the urgency of implementing sustainable river management practices and highlighted the need for international cooperation to address shared challenges faced by South Asian rivers.

Throughout the conference, participants engaged in vibrant panel discussions, thought-provoking paper presentations, and interactive sessions, delving into various aspects of river governance, environmental conservation, and the social and economic implications of preserving and sustainably managing rivers in the region. The successful execution of the conference, appreciated by all participants, provided a promising foundation for future collaborative initiatives in safeguarding the rivers of South Asia and ensuring their sustainable utilization for generations to come.

