



Indian Council of World Affairs  
Sapru House, Barakhamba Road  
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## Press Release

on

### **Joint Workshop on “India and Southeast Asia in the Changing World”**

At a Joint Workshop, organized by the Indian Council of World Affairs and the Institute of Foreign Policy Studies (IFPS), University of Calcutta, at Sapru House on February 11, New Delhi, research scholars from the IIFPS presented papers based on their original and insightful research and field trips. They showed their fascinating findings on the deep impact of the Indian cultural heritage on the region through archaeological and epigraphical imagery. The common view was that India’s Look East Policy was not written in the 1990s, but in the early historical period. At the Workshop, energy security challenges and issues pertaining to territorial claims in the South China Sea were also discussed.



*Inaugural Session: (L-R) Amb. Rajiv Sikri, Amb. Rajiv Bhatia, DG, ICWA and Prof. Bharati Ray*

Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia, Director General, ICWA, welcomed the joint initiative between the two institutes to study India’s engagement with Southeast Asia in the historic era and to examine the current security scenario in the region. Prof. Bharti Ray, former MP, former Vice-President of ICCR, and currently Professor of History at University of Calcutta, elaborated on the same theme. At the first session, chaired by Ambassador Rajiv Sikri, Prof. H.S. Vasudevan offered his views on the historical connectivity between India and ASEAN, while two research scholars, Bishmupriya Basak and Suchandra Ghosh, gave a riveting visual presentation on depicting Indian cultural and religious influence in southern Vietnam.

Dr. Salam Irene from Manipur University, in her firsthand account of the close linkages between Myanmar and Manipur, drew attention to the 40,000 Meitei-origin community in Myanmar, mostly concentrated around Mandalay. Referring to the vigorous cross-border trade at Moreh-Tamu, she described the day-to-day hardships encountered by the traders, owing to poor infrastructure, lack of roads, and complex procedures followed at multiple check posts. Dr. Irene's view was that cultural affinities and close ties between the Manipuris and the Myanmaris should be leveraged by policy makers to strengthen India-Myanmar ties.

The second session of the Workshop, chaired by Prof. Madhu Bhalla, centred around the emerging challenges in the Southeast Asia region, stemming from overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea and China's assertiveness in the region. Research papers were presented by Prof. Tridib Chakraborti, and research scholars, Subhodeep Bhattacharya and Ananya Sengupta. The participants raised questions ranging from India's role in the South China Sea, India-China rivalry, and the need for India's greater role in the area.



*Session in progress*

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