

Nehginpao Kipgen Center for Southeast Asian Studies (NKCSEAS) CENTER REPORT 2025

Founding

Within 13 schools in O.P. Jindal University, there operates many Centers of research. The Center for Southeast Asian Studies is named after an eminent scholar with expertise in Southeast Asian affairs, Professor Nehginpao Kipgen. Prof Kipgen got approval to set up a Center for Southeast Asian Studies within the Jindal School of International Affairs (JSIA) in 2016, with the vision of making Southeast Asia a cornerstone of teaching and research in the University and beyond. Since then, despite multiple challenges, the Centre is carrying forward Prof Kipgen's legacy, after his untimely demise due to COVID in 2021. It is driven by a young and dynamic team who are committed to contribute towards Southeast Asian Studies.

Vision & Mission The Center envisions itself to be a dedicated hub of Southeast Asian studies in India and the wider South Asian region, and a thought leader and opinion shaper in South Asia-Southeast Asia relations.

The Center intends to bridge and interconnect Southeast Asia with the rest of the world through teaching, research, publication, partnerships, collaborations, cultural diplomacy, and people-to-people exchanges.

Research Focus

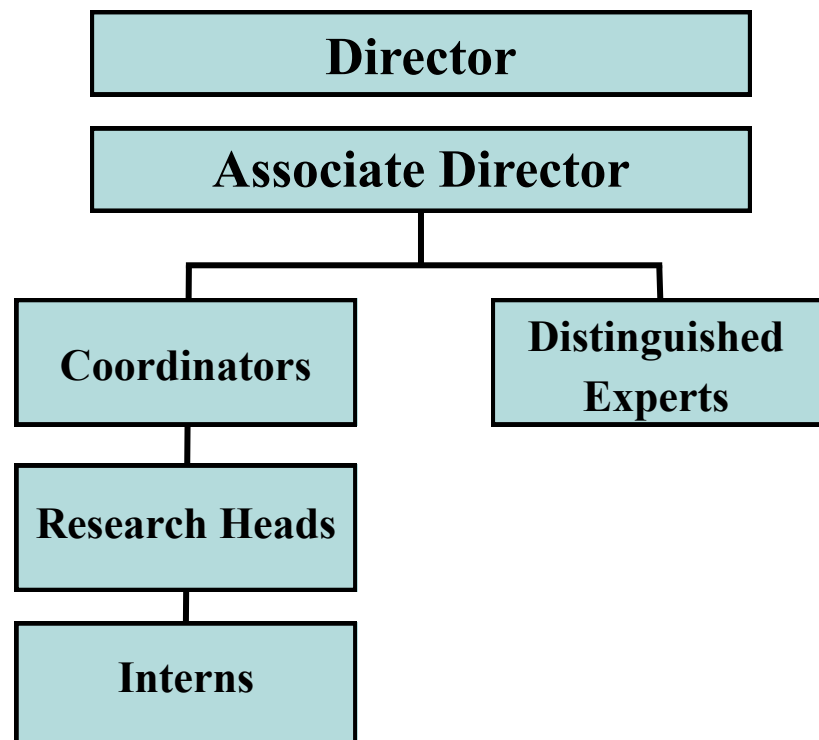
The Center looks into the following themes:

1. Comprehend the overarching history and politics of Southeast Asia and its significance to the world.
2. Underscore the importance of comparative politics in, and international relations of, Southeast Asia.

3. Analyze events pertaining to Southeast Asian countries and organizations, especially the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), its history, accomplishments and challenges in regional and international affairs.
4. Study the economics of countries in Southeast Asia and examine the level of regional economic integration.
5. Survey and explore the rich cultural diversity and heterogeneous societies of Southeast Asia.
6. Delve into the various aspects of traditional and non-traditional security in Southeast Asia.
7. Examine the legal factors concerning multilateral agreements vis-a-vis ASEAN and Southeast Asia.
8. Assess the role of great powers politics and the management of its contestation in Southeast Asia.
9. Appraise India's engagement of Southeast Asia and its dialogue partnership with ASEAN.
10. Enrich the understanding of the Indo-Pacific narrative in Southeast Asian affairs.

Renamed Nehginpao Kipgen Center for Southeast Asian Studies (NKCSEAS), the Center revived its operations in November 2023, under the leadership of Prof. (Dr.) Pankaj Kumar Jha and Dr. Gitanjali Sinha Roy. The Center had 18 members and worked on increasing interest towards the current dynamics of Southeast Asia. The Center faced challenges again with the untimely demise of Director, Prof. Pankaj Jha in May 2024. It created a massive void within JSIA and NKCSEAS. Due to unavoidable and unforeseen circumstances, the Center's work and activity suffered. However, since the start of the Fall Semester 2024, NKCSEAS is being headed by Dr. Shrabana Barua as its new Director. In August 2025, Mr Harsh Mahaseth joined as the Associate Director of the Center. A new team, a new structure and many new collaborations are underway again.

NKCSEAS team





Prof. (Dr.) Shrabana Barua
Director



Prof. Harsh Mahaseth
Associate Director



D.P. Vinitha
Center Coordinator



Mahesh Kumar Naidu
Center Coordinator

The NKCSEAS team now comprises of 21 students from within JGU. The new structure leaves scope for Distinguished Experts (non-resident) to join the team who shall be making research contributions to the Center's website and advising the team if and when need be.

NKCSEAS in 2025

On February 5, 2025, NKCSEAS hosted a virtual panel discussion titled “Four Years of Civil War in Myanmar: Assessing the Conflict and Its Regional Implications” on Google Meet. The event marked four years since the military coup in Myanmar that triggered a prolonged civil war and humanitarian crisis. Moderated by Dr. Shrabana Barua, the discussion brought together leading experts to assess the evolving situation and explore possible pathways toward peace and regional stability. The panel



featured Mr. Subir Bhaumik, veteran journalist and Myanmar specialist; Professor Dr. Sreeradha Datta from the Jindal School of International Affairs; and Mr. Angshuman Choudhury, Joint PhD Scholar at the National University of Singapore and King’s College London. Speakers discussed the growing entrenchment of the conflict between Myanmar’s military junta and resistance groups, including the National Unity Government (NUG) and various ethnic armed organizations. The panelists highlighted the fractured nature of opposition, the role of cross-border support, and the challenges in achieving national reconciliation amidst ongoing violence. The discussion also addressed the role of regional and international actors. ASEAN’s limited success in implementing its Five-Point Consensus was critically examined, while India’s strategic dilemma—balancing security interests with democratic values—was noted. China’s influence, border trade dynamics, and humanitarian access were also key points of concern. The panel concluded by emphasizing the need for sustained global attention, more inclusive dialogue frameworks, and a regional rethinking of non-interference norms to effectively address Myanmar’s worsening crisis. Ambassador (ret.) Gautam Mukhopadhyaya and a Myanmar expert remarked on the openness and candid discussion hosted by NKCSEAS and made valuable suggestions during the ‘audience remarks’ section. Mr Bhaumik referred to the idea of a ‘Gandhi Peace Mission’ to be made part of the Indian Mission in Myanmar and suggested ways to engage with actors beyond the SAC led government in Naypyitaw. This found support from other speakers as well. Overall, the insightful session deepened participants’ understanding of the complex civil war in Myanmar and reaffirmed NKCSEAS’s role in promoting critical engagement with pressing Southeast Asian issues.



On February 14, 2025, NKCSEAS and the Pankaj Kumar Jha Centre for Security Studies (PKJCSS) at JSIA jointly hosted a special lecture on “Underwater Domain Awareness (UDA) Framework and its Prospects for India’s Eastern Coastal Security.” The session was delivered by Commander (Dr) Arnab Das, Founder and Director of the Maritime Research Centre (MRC), and brought critical attention to the emerging strategic importance of the underwater domain in the broader Indo- Pacific security architecture. Dr. Das highlighted India’s evolving maritime role, particularly along its eastern seaboard, within the dynamic geopolitical landscape of the Indo-Pacific. The discussion addressed the challenges of tropical underwater acoustics, the intersection of climate change and maritime strategy, and the role

of the blue economy in sustainable coastal development. The lecture also explored advancements in underwater technology, acoustic surveillance, and strategic defense systems. Dr. Das emphasized the importance of a collaborative regional approach, capacity- building, and multi-stakeholder engagement to strengthen India’s maritime preparedness and resilience. The event drew participation from students, faculty, and researchers, and underscored the significance of underwater domain awareness as a key component of India’s coastal security strategy.

On March 18, 2025, Director NKCSEAS, Dr. Shrabana Barua, attended a special meeting at the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, Institute of International Relations, Hanoi. The meeting, led by Dr. Bui Viet Huong, Director of the Center of India Studies, focused on exploring avenues for academic collaboration between the HCM Academy and NKCSEAS/JGU. Discussions revolved around joint research opportunities, faculty lecture programs and research exchange. The meeting was attended by key faculty members and delegates from the Academy, strengthening prospects for future India-Vietnam academic cooperation.



On March 19, 2025, Dr. Shrabana Barua, presented a paper at the international conference on “Roles of India and Vietnam in Developing the Global South,” held at the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Hanoi. Her presentation focused on “Infrastructure and Connectivity in the Context of the Global South,” highlighting the strategic importance of regional partnerships, especially between India and Vietnam, in enhancing sustainable infrastructure and promoting inclusive growth. The session emphasized South-South cooperation as a key driver for regional integration and equitable development across the Global South. On March

20, she also had the opportunity to visit the University of Social Science and Humanities (USSH) at the Vietnam National University (VNU). She was accompanied by Dr Monica Sharma from the Indian Mission to engage and seek avenues of partnership between JGU and USSH. As a result, students from USSH have been invited to apply for the Naveen Jindal Young Research Fellowship 2025. This allows researchers from across the globe to do research and publish with JGU assistance and live in the JGU campus in Sonipat for over 40 days, with food and lodging being taken care of. Such developments help achieve NKCSEAS’s mission of furthering people-to-people links and positively impact India-Vietnam relations, among others.

On April 25, 2025, the NKCSEAS at the Jindal School of International Affairs (JSIA) organized the 3rd Research Dialogue Session on the theme ‘Assessing Non-Traditional Security Threats in Southeast Asia’. The session was judged by Prof. Harsh Mahaseth and Prof. Dr. Shrabana Barua. It featured insightful student presentations followed by expert feedback and discussions, with papers exploring critical issues ranging from cyber threats and environmental security to ASEAN’s evolving role in regional crises.



On May 2, 2025, the NKCSEAS at the Jindal School of International Affairs hosted a captivating session on ‘Indonesia in BRICS’ with Ambassador Gurjit Singh. Drawing from his extensive diplomatic experience, Amb. Singh offered profound insights into Indonesia’s evolving role within BRICS and its significance for the Global South.



On August 18, 2025 the NKCSEAS at the Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, organized a Panel Discussion on ‘Matters Southeast Asia: Power Politics and Security’. From shifting U.S. policies and South Korea’s evolving Indo-Pacific outlook to the pressing challenges of maritime terrorism in Southeast Asia, the discussion brought forth fresh perspectives and critical insights from distinguished experts - Dr. Monish Tourangbam (Senior Research Consultant, Chintan Research Foundation), Dr. Soumya Awasthi (Fellow, Observer Research Foundation), and Dr. Tunchinmang Langel (Research Fellow, Indian Council of World Affairs) - and was expertly moderated by Prof. Dr. Shrabana Barua.



On August 29, 2025, the NKCSEAS at the JSIA, O.P. Jindal Global University, welcomed a distinguished delegation from the Ho Chi Minh Academy of Politics, Vietnam. The visit featured a special lecture by Professor. Sunetra Ghatak, Associate Professor at the Jindal School of Government and Public Policy, on 'India's Evolving Social Welfare, Labour, and Employment Policies.' The session was moderated by Professor. Shrabana Barua, Associate Professor and Director, NKCSEAS, and joined by Prof. Harsh Mahaseth, Associate Professor and Associate Director, NKCSEAS. Prof. Ghatak shed light on key reforms such as the 2019 - 2020 labour codes, initiatives like the E-Shram portal, and best practices including MGNREGA. She emphasized the importance of rights-based guarantees, digital interventions, and local delivery systems in promoting inclusive growth and advancing SDG 8.



On September 15, the NKCSEAS at the JSIA, O.P. Jindal Global University, organized a Book Discussion on 'BRI and the Indo-Pacific: Reinventing Traditions', edited by Dr. Bhavna Singh. Held in hybrid mode, the session featured distinguished speakers - Dr. Bhavna Singh (Editor and Visiting Fellow, Chintan Research Foundation), Dr. Md. Yasin (Assistant Professor of Chinese, Department of Foreign Languages, Aligarh Muslim University), and Dr. Anuraag Khaund (PhD Candidate, Diplomacy and International Politics, Central University of Gujarat). The discussion was moderated by Professor. Dr. Shrabana Barua. The session delved into themes such as debt diplomacy, Xi-economics, China's expanding naval power, the transition from a brown to a blue economy, and the persistence of bloc politics - illuminating how competing narratives of influence continue to reshape Asia's strategic order.



On September 24, 2025, the NKCSEAS at the JSIA, O.P. Jindal Global University, hosted a Special Lecture in hybrid mode on ‘Philippines’ Foreign Policy and the South China Sea Dispute’. Speakers Mr. Don McLain Gill (De La Salle University, Manila) and Dr. Pooja Bhatt (JSIA) shared insightful perspectives on China’s nine-dash line, the Philippines’ defense strategy, and evolving U.S.–China dynamics. The discussion underscored the importance of strategic partnerships and adherence to UNCLOS for regional stability. The session was coordinated by Prof. Dr. Shrabana Barua.



On October 7, 2025, the NKCSEAS participated in a Roundtable Conference on ‘India’s Neighborhood Crisis: Political Instability and Regional Implications.’ The Centre was represented by Prof. Dr. Shrabana Barua, who shared insightful perspectives on the evolving situation in Myanmar and its broader regional implications.



NKCSEAS has many events, projects, publications and visits lined up for the coming months and shall continue to strive to disseminate knowledge and information about Southeast Asia to JGU and beyond.

Wishing you and your loved ones a great year ahead.

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026!

Best wishes,
Team NKCSEAS

This report has been prepared by the team at Nehginpao Kipgen Center for Southeast Asian Studies (NKCSEAS). This is not an official brochure and only partly reflects the overall work undertaken at NKCSEAS. For further information, please reach out to us cseas@jgu.edu.in or follow us on [nkcseas_jgu/](#) [@NKCSEAS_JGU](#).