



Rohingya people walking barefoot on a sandy beach. Photo: Anwar Hossain

**TDS:** Myanmar has entered a more uncertain political phase after the ousting of Aung San Suu Kyi. In Rakhine State, the Arakan Army is fighting against the Myanmar army. What could be a way out?

**IA:** Earlier, it was a strategic weakness on Bangladesh's part that it only negotiated with Suu Kyi's party, which was one part of the government, but not with the army of Myanmar.

A civil conflict scaled up in Myanmar between Suu Kyi's party and army after the removal of Aung San Suu Kyi from power on February 1, 2021. Suu Kyi's party-supported government in exile is said to have recognised the Rohingyas as citizens of Myanmar. The Myanmar army is domestically weak due to internal conflicts. So, many insurgent groups are stepping up against the army, including the Arakan Army.

Now it is an opportunity for Bangladesh to talk directly with the Myanmar army about the repatriation. Because no matter which party remains in power, the army will always be part of

the government as a state institution and political body. Myanmar's army could also be interested in repatriation of Rohingyas since it is facing a lack of international credibility due to the civil war. The Chinese ambassador in Bangladesh is also hopeful about the repatriation.

We must ensure that the repatriation should not be tokenism. Friendly states should be included in this repatriation process.

**TDS:** It seems that due to the Russia-Ukraine war, global attention has shifted away from the Rohingya crisis. What can Bangladesh do to keep the issue alive internationally?

**IA:** The war unveiled the Western world's duplicity. For the Rohingya crisis, they would always say sanctions aren't effective to change anything but now they are giving many sanctions against Russia. It seems the international community hasn't given up their economic interest in Myanmar.

*The interview was taken by Priyam Paul*