

UNESCO RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES

Myanmar's Democratic Transition What Kind of Democracy for New Times?

Speaker

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12:30 – 2:00 pm

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Abstract

Fifty years of military dictatorship in Myanmar has not eliminated the quest for democracy for many of the country's citizens. While this quest is perhaps best known from the high profile image of Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy, there is also a strong grassroots movement for whom democracy is an important goal. Ironically, the progress for Myanmar's democratic development remains in the hands of many the same military who participated actively in the processes of dictatorship over the past half a century.

This seminar will explore the issue of democratic development in Myanmar, especially in light of its membership in ASEAN and the kind of future that is being projected for the country's citizens. Key issues related to Myanmar's ethnic minorities will be discussed and the way these have been handled as part of a peace building process that needs to precede any real nation building process. Specific barriers to democratic development will also be highlighted in relation to issues such as representation and participation in political processes and corruption.

2015 is a key time for Myanmar when national elections are scheduled and ASEAN integration is planned. The question is whether Myanmar will be ready for a full democratic transition that will signal a new future for a country shielded for so long from public scrutiny and external observation.

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