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Top: Singapore's President, Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, (centre) unveiling a Special Edition of the ISAS publication, SINGAPORE AND INDIA: TOWARDS A SHARED FUTURE, at a function in New Delhi on 10 February 2015. Special Guest, India's Railway Minister, Mr Suresh Prabhu (second from right); Singapore's High Commissioner to India, Mr T K Lim, (right); ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, (second from left) and ISAS Director, Professor Tan Tai Yong, (left) applaud.

Bottom: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr Nara Chandrababu Naidu, (right) answering questions after delivering the keynote address at the ISAS 9th International Conference on 'The States of South Asia', held in Singapore on 14 November 2014; others at the keynote session: Mr S Iswaran, (left) Singapore's Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister for Home Affairs & Trade and Industry; and ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai.

Photos: By Special Arrangement

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From the DIRECTOR'S DESK



Dear Readers

Celebrating 50 years of Independence, Singapore is looking for ways to expand its horizons in every sphere of civilised endeavour. Inspired by this spirit, we at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore, re-dedicate ourselves to studying contemporary South Asia from a globalised perspective. It is, therefore, doubly fortuitous that Singapore's diplomatic relationship with India is also 50-year strong. To mark this historic occasion, ISAS has produced a commemorative volume, tracing the saga of Singapore-India fellowship – in a number of fields – with a great deal of care and candour. I thank Singapore's former High Commissioner to India, Ambassador See Chak Mun, for this meticulous and forward-looking work. The book was launched by Singapore's President, His Excellency Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, at a function in New Delhi on 10 February 2015. Befitting such a momentous occasion, we feature the book launch as the main Cover Story in this issue of *South Asia*.

The constituent states of India, as well as the sovereign states of South Asia have often made their presence felt outside their own boundaries. Appropriately, the 'States of South Asia' was the talking

theme at the ISAS Annual Conference in November 2014. His Excellency Mr Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister of the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, delivered the keynote address. Equally significant was the focus on other South Asian countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The thematic conference is being featured as the second Cover Story in this issue of *South Asia*. Besides the priorities of a reconstituted Indian state like Andhra Pradesh, the Story covers two other aspects – a tribute to Allama Muhammad Iqbal, a true South Asian poet, philosopher and politician; a comment on the Army's continuing role in the Pakistani polity.

India, which attracted a lot of international attention by appearing to change political course in the general election in April-May 2014, has remained in the news in economic as well as geopolitical terms. While *South Asia* had previously captured the mood of this political change, the current issue looks at India's macro-level economic and geopolitical priorities. Taken note of, from a current affairs perspective, are the sudden upward revision of the country's gross domestic product, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Make in India' campaign, as well as New Delhi's growing interests in its immediate and

extended neighbourhood – ranging from the Indian Ocean to Nepal, as well as the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) corridor and China itself.

At ISAS, we seek to study contemporary South Asia in terms of both real-time comments on unfolding events and long-term assessments of political, economic and foreign policy trends. In this light, youthful students come to ISAS for brief periods as Interns. Reflections by several recent Interns – their impressions of ISAS at first sight – are noteworthy for buoyancy of spirit.

Interestingly, not only has ISAS focused on several Indian states over time, in fact ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, has recently been appointed Singapore's Special Envoy to Andhra Pradesh. It has indeed been a period of considerable intellectual and outreach activities at ISAS since the last issue of *South Asia* was published. So, the current issue has an extended timeline from July 2014 to March 2015, nine months instead of the usual six. I hope you will find this issue worthy of your attention.

TAN TAI YONG

KOCHI CONSENSUS

SINDERPAL SINGH

The Observer Research Foundation, based in New Delhi, with support from India's Ministry of External Affairs hosted the first Indian Ocean Dialogue (IOD) in Kochi, Kerala, from 5 to 7 September 2014. The Dialogue saw the participation of 67 officials and representatives of think tanks and civil societies from 24 countries that are member-states and dialogue partners of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).

The participants discussed six broad themes – the geopolitical contours of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), maritime security challenges, strengthening regional institutions, information sharing, cooperation in disaster relief, and economic cooperation.

Several points were discussed and affirmed at this first Indian Ocean Dialogue in Kochi. The first was that the strategic and foreign policy communities as well as civil society groups must actively contribute to the emergence of a vibrant Indian Ocean community engaged in open-ended regionalism. The second was the need to draw in representatives from the business community in order to strengthen the Indian Ocean Dialogue and help explore the emerging opportunities for economic integration in the region. Thirdly, the participants of the IOD noted that the ongoing evolution in great-power relations and the rise of economic and strategic capabilities of regional states are transforming the regional environment of the Indian Ocean littoral. In addition, the region's resources and rapid economic growth are once again bringing the Indian Ocean region to the centre-stage of world affairs. The participants also discussed the question of maritime piracy and terrorism and the critical importance of intelligence-sharing and trust-building

among the governments in coping with these challenges. In this context, the Dialogue urged the need for development of necessary capabilities, legal frameworks and wherewithal to tackle these challenges.

The fifth point raised involved a suggestion for IORA to consider creating a regional approach on both the post-2015 development goals and the post-Kyoto climate treaty. "Sustainable use of oceans and marine resources" has a direct impact on peoples of the region, and an IORA perspective would be useful. The region is also vulnerable to the intensification of the impact of climate change, and the countries of the region are required to take necessary measures to help build climate resilience. On the issue of maritime security, the participants noted that the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) has emerged as a useful forum for broader security cooperation in the IOR. It was felt that there should be greater synergy between IONS and IORA in addressing the maritime security challenges in the region. More broadly, there was consensus that the Indian Ocean Dialogue could possibly be institutionalised as an IOR Forum to develop wider thinking on different aspects of regional cooperation and complement the discussions in the appropriate cooperation mechanisms of IORA. On a related note, there was a



Logo of the first Indian Ocean Dialogue, showing the extent of the vast Indian Ocean.

Photo: By Special Arrangement



Photo: By Special Arrangement

Panellists at a session of the first Indian Ocean Dialogue, held in Kochi (India) from 5 to 7 September 2014. Dr Sinderpal Singh, (second from left) is Senior Research Fellow at ISAS and author of this article.

suggestion for the IORA to elevate its discussions from the ministerial level to a summit level interaction to enhance and accelerate regional cooperation and strengthen regional institutions.

Looking at regional linkages, the region is now the venue for several proposals for many mega trans-border projects of connectivity, whose early

implementation, it was felt, could transform the economic future of the region.

In closing discussions, the participants agreed that the IORA must focus on early implementation of practical proposals at hand for regional cooperation. The focus must be on projects than can make early and

substantive impact on the lives of the peoples of the region and generate much-needed popular support for regional integration.

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Towards A New Brand-India FOREIGN POLICY

P S SURYANARAYANA

World-View and Strategic Vision have often been seen as attributes alien to the pursuit of 'reactive' foreign policy by India's successive governments. Such a sweeping assessment is, of course, debatable, especially so among the archetypal argumentative-Indians. However, today's India finds itself increasingly in the vortex of swirling cross-currents in global geopolitics in general, and regional power politics in particular, with reference to the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean zones. A logical question, therefore, is: Has Mr Narendra Modi – India's new-style Prime Minister since 26 May 2014 – fashioned or articulated a Brand-India foreign policy? While a quick answer is: 'no', a reflective response is: 'perhaps, he will do so, in due course'.

China, Japan, the US, Russia, Australia, France, Germany, Canada, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Asia, and the Indian Ocean Rim have all figured in Mr Modi's frenetic foreign policy forays since he assumed office.

Hailing Singapore's founding Prime Minister, the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew, as "a global thinker who saw things ahead of others", Mr Modi has said that Mr Lee Kuan Yew "believed in India's potential more than many of us [in India] did. ... His achievements and thoughts give me confidence in the possibility of India's own transformation". In saying this, upon

arriving in Singapore to attend the state funeral of Mr Lee Kuan Yew on 29 March 2015, Mr Modi not only paid a solemn tribute to the departed leader but also sought to project the possibility of a new Brand-India.

As this is written, Mr Modi is likely to meet China's powerful President, Mr Xi Jinping, in Beijing in May 2015. Less than a year earlier, the two had held a major summit in New Delhi, following their feel-good excursion as well as informal talks in Ahmedabad on Mr Modi's birthday, in September 2014. In a turn of the metaphor, those talks were indeed held under the canopy of a real-time military face-off between the two countries along the undefined Line of Actual control in their disputed Himalayan frontier. That episode of confrontation was non-lethal and did not escalate into a fire-fight. However, those utterly-acute military tensions were palpably felt during the Modi-Xi parleys. In the event, the localised military confrontation, which had started even before Mr Xi's visit to India in September 2014, ended only by the end of that month, when Mr Modi began talks with US President, Mr Barack Obama, in Washington.

In future-perfect terms, the positives from the Xi-Modi summit of September 2014 are quite substantive. One, the parallel stand-off between the trigger-ready troops was defused

through diplomacy and military-level talks under a previously-agreed due process. Two, with Mr Modi insisting on a resumption of the stalled clarification of the undefined Line of Actual Control, Mr Xi agreed to explore an "early" settlement of the larger border dispute. Three, India and China agreed to cooperate, just one step at a time, in such globally-important futurist areas as civil nuclear energy and the Outer Space. A caveat, though, is that the life of these positives will be determined, in part, by the future of China's "all-weather friendship" with Pakistan, which, in fine gloss, is India's emotionally-estranged fraternal neighbour. Relevant to Sino-Indian relations will also be the future course of China's equation with Russia, whose one-time treaty with India has, more or less, become a faded memory now.

With Mr Modi having pledged to scale-up India's Narasimha-Rao-era 'Look East Policy' as an 'Act East Policy', New Delhi's low-key strategic partnership with ASEAN stands a chance of crystallising into closer fellowship. This is possible if India does begin to play a proactive role in the ASEAN-led East Asia Summit process and the related forum of defence ministers.

On a different but related front, two-way calibration of Indo-US ties will be variously relevant to New Delhi's 'Act East Policy' and relations with China as well as Japan. Tokyo is still a steadfast,

if not always an absolutely-intimate ally, of Washington. Mr Modi's summit-talks with Japanese Prime Minister, Mr Shinzo Abe, in Kyoto and Tokyo in September 2014 revealed scope for closer economic and defence-related cooperation. It is possible to discount China as the sole common concern of India and Japan. But the Chinese factor in the Indo-US equation has come into greater focus following Mr Modi's two summit meetings of rapid-diplomacy with Mr Obama. After they first met at the White House in September 2014, Mr Obama travelled to New Delhi to participate in India's Republic Day celebrations in January 2015.

Three aspects of the Obama-Modi talks on 25 January 2015 are potential game-changers in India's foreign policy pursuits, going forward. One, Indo-US engagement will enter a qualitatively-high phase of genuine mutual trust if the decks are cleared, as now promised, for implementing the seminal-but-stalled bilateral civil nuclear pact. Two, the agreed scale-up of US-India defence ties can alter East Asian dynamics. The reason is that the defence-upgrade plans are exemplified by co-research-and-development of knowhow for futurist aircraft-carriers and jet-engines. Such a potential game-changer will be of interest and concern to China. However, it is too early to bet on India and the US being able to go the whole hog in this direction, because of democracy-vagaries in both these countries. Three, the Obama-Modi 'strategic' vision of peace and stability, in the Asia-Pacific and the Indian-Ocean regions, is a political indicator – not really a warning signal to China – about the potential of new Indo-US convergence.

It is in this overarching context that China will assess the long-term impact,

if any, of Mr Modi's foreign-policy forays to Sri Lanka as well as Seychelles and Mauritius in the Indian Ocean region in March 2015. While in Sri Lanka, Mr Modi reached out to that country's Sinhala-majority and Tamil-minority in cultural and economic terms.

Bilateral issues of Colombo's adverse trade balance, as well as the rights of fishermen from both sides, were discussed, with no immediate breakthrough, as this is written. On Sri Lanka's internal issue of a 'fair' deal for the Tamil-minority, India's ability to influence the search for a settlement will depend on how well Mr Modi can soften Colombo's grudging acceptance of an Indian role. On the wider international front, Colombo faces a puzzle over the niche status that the Chinese President wants to confer on Sri Lanka in his grand vision of a '21st Century Maritime Silk Road'. Sri Lanka's relatively new President, Mr Maithripala Sirisena, who chose India as the first destination for his foreign travels as the executive head of state, was, at that time, seen to be weighing the new Maritime Silk Road idea. Unsurprisingly, Beijing has later proposed trilateral China-India-Sri Lanka dialogue to advance this maritime initiative. As of writing, neither India nor Sri Lanka has responded to this in real-world terms.

As for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, Mr Modi is seeking to keep alive the spirit in which the SAARC leaders had responded positively to his invitation to witness his ceremonial assumption of office in May 2014. He is vigorously pursuing his initiative of launching an Indian satellite into Space, by the end of 2016, for the benefit of all SAARC countries including Pakistan.

With Islamabad, India's Foreign Secretary, Dr S Jaishankar, has begun

exploring the possibility of the Sino-Indian model of narrowing differences and finding common ground. However, India remains unimpressed by the 'benign' attitude of Pakistan towards its own 'master-minds' of 'anti-India terrorism'. Older sensibilities over the issue of Jammu and Kashmir persist in both India and Pakistan, as this is written.

On a different plane, Mr Modi has sought to evolve a doctrine of Himalayan zone of peace, security, and development through personal diplomacy towards both Nepal and Bhutan. This may have some relevance to Sino-Indian relations, going forward.

There are signs – as of writing – that Mr Modi will seek to carry with him India's border-states of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu in order to improve relations with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, respectively. It is interesting, in this context, that an Indian state – Andhra Pradesh – has blazed a new trail in India's foreign-policy pursuits, by successfully inviting Singapore to be the preferred partner for a mega-project.

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A Sub-regional CORRIDOR

LALDINKIMA SAILO

Sub-regional cooperation across international borders is increasingly used as a strategy to promote the development of peripheral areas in different parts of the world. Sometime before the development of India's Northeast Region (NER) was linked to the opening-up of the region for engagement with countries on its eastern and southern flanks, China had begun to perceive the cultivation of good relations in its immediate neighbourhood as essential for the development of its relatively underdeveloped south-western region. Given India's own evolving orientation towards engaging its neighbours for the development of NER, it has explored sub-regional groupings such as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) and the Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar (BCIM) Forum. The thrust of these initiatives on land-connectivity and cultural relations places a sharp focus on the Northeast Region of India.

A two-day international seminar titled 'BCIM: Sub-Regional Cooperation for the Development of the Peripheral Areas' was organised by the Indian Council of Social Science Research-North Eastern Regional Centre (ICSSR-NERC) in Shillong, Meghalaya, on 27 and 28 November 2014. Participants from China, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and the

Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), Singapore, deliberated on the impact of such initiatives on the peripheral areas of the proposed sub-region, including Northeast India.

In the case of China, a strategy to address bilateral concerns on one hand and concentrate on trade, commerce, and connectivity-infrastructure on the other hand was developed. This strategy of linking peace and development or trade and diplomacy became a part of Chinese state policy wherein the federal system allowed the provinces an unusual degree of autonomy in engaging with its neighbours. The south-western province of Yunnan, which shares a 4,000-km international border with Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam, has had the leeway to position itself as a bridgehead for engagement with both South and Southeast Asia, with the provincial capital Kunming as an important hub.

In 1992, with assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and building on their shared histories and cultures, six countries – China (particularly the provinces of Yunnan and the Guanzhong Autonomous regions), Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam – launched a programme of sub-regional economic cooperation, the Greater Mekong Subregion

(GMS), covering nine priority sectors: agriculture, energy, environment, human resource development, investment, telecommunication, tourism, transport infrastructure, and transport and trade facilitation.

In India, the idea of BCIM cooperation received formal official recognition in May 2013 in a paragraph included in the joint statement issued after the visit of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang to India. The Chinese and Indian governments proposed to establish a Joint Study Group (JSG) on "strengthening connectivity in the BCIM region for closer economic, trade and people-to-people linkages and to initiating the development of a BCIM Economic Corridor". Subsequent joint statements, issued at the conclusion of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to China in October 2013 and the visit by President Xi Jinping to India in September 2014, also made references to it.

The inaugural BCIM Forum meeting was held in Kunming in 1999, and it was called the 'Kunming Initiative'. Here, representatives of the Yunnan government, academic institutions, scholars and other experts met at the Track-II level. Since then eleven full-scale meetings were held between 1999 and 2013 in order to develop a framework of ideas and proposals. In

the Indian perspective, BCIM was a Track-II endeavour, even though others – China and Myanmar in particular – and later Bangladesh, too, saw it more as a government-supported exercise. A Kunming-to-Kolkata (K2K) Car Rally, organised in February 2013, with the assistance of the four governments, gave a fillip to the idea.

In the currently evolved framework, the overarching goal is “economic and social development and poverty alleviation”. At the first JSG meeting, it was agreed that the BCIM Economic Corridor would run from Kunming in the east to Kolkata in the west, broadly spanning the region, covering Mandalay, Dhaka and Chittagong and “other major cities and ports as key nodes”. This cooperation would have four principal components:

i) Physical connectivity through multi-modal transport as well as energy, power and telecommunication linkages;

ii) Trade in goods, services and investment, including finance;

iii) Environmentally sustainable development; and

iv) People-to-people contacts through exchanges in the domains of education, science and technology, culture, healthcare, tourism and human resource development.

As in the case of Northeast India, for Bangladesh and Myanmar, sub-regional groups are avenues of access to larger markets, capital and technologies.

Given the size of India and China, there are concerns in Myanmar and Bangladesh that their interests may be subsumed by the interests of these two emerging giants. That said,

given that Bangladesh and Myanmar are crucial links to any sub-regional arrangements involving India's eastern region, both countries have an important role to play which they are keen to fulfil.

There are also concerns, emanating from within the NER, Bangladesh and Myanmar, that an ‘economic corridor’ that focuses on the transport infrastructure and highways might not help foster commensurate investments along the ‘sideways’. There is increasing articulation, among scholars and experts from within the region, of the limits of transit trade which brings only a small measure of benefit along the way but enormous amount of social, environmental and health problems. Participants emphasised the importance of involving local stakeholders, including state governments and the private sector, as a *sine qua non* for the development of the peripheral areas.

From the strategic point, New Delhi's concerns about engaging with China in the border regions persist. Many Indian security experts are still resolutely opposed to the idea of BCIM. There is a sense that without addressing these concerns in a constructive manner, the process would continue to face resistance.

The success of planned connectivity projects would be dependent on the availability of finance, and there is the need to engage a varied range of capital-rich countries, such as Japan, Republic of Korea and Singapore, where funds for several projects could be sourced.

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Photo: By Special Arrangement

ISAS book, *Connecting India to ASEAN: Opportunities and Challenges in India's Northeast*, being launched by India's Chief Election Commissioner, Mr H S Brahma (second from right), in New Delhi on 10 March 2015. Others in the picture (from right): Dr S Narayan, Visiting Senior Research Fellow at ISAS and co-editor of this book; Mr T K Lim, High Commissioner of Singapore to India; and Mr Laldinkima Sailo, Research Associate at ISAS and co-editor of this book, and author of the accompanying article.

New Mood on INDO-NEPAL FRONT

RAJEEV RANJAN CHATURVEDY

"A happy Nepal gives India a reason to smile". This statement by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while inaugurating the India-funded trauma centre in Kathmandu on 25 November 2014, underlines a change in Delhi's approach towards its neglected neighbour. Modi's government has created a pleasant and hopeful atmosphere in the political-level discourse between the two countries. He has visited Nepal twice in a short span. In fact, his first visit in August 2014 was the first by an Indian Prime Minister after a gap of 17 years.

In his statement on 25 November 2014, prior to his departure for Nepal, Modi said, "This will be my second visit to Nepal within four months, which reflects the importance we attach to our unique and special relations with Nepal. There has been significant progress in the implementation of the decisions taken during my visit to Nepal in August 2014. I look forward to reviewing the progress in our relations with Prime Minister Sushil Koirala and other Nepalese leaders. We also hope to conclude some concrete agreements in the areas of connectivity and development cooperation".

As in the case of a number of countries with a powerful neighbour and significant economic interdependence across a long border, Nepal's relationship with India has been one of familiarity and resentment. The absence of any geographical barrier between the

two countries makes Nepal look like an integral part of the vast Indian sub-continent. The bilateral Treaty of Peace and Friendship, reached in 1950, has formed the basis of India's policy towards Nepal. Indians tend to believe that they have been of greater help to Nepal than the other way round, whereas the Nepalese do not seem to think so. In all likelihood, benefits have accrued to both sides. The security and many other aspects of the 1950 Treaty have gradually been overtaken by time, but India remains sensitive to China's military presence in Tibet, which borders Nepal, and Beijing's increasing influence in Nepal itself. The only aspect of the Treaty that still remains fully operational relates to 'national treatment', which clearly benefits Nepal.

There is a view that, since 1947, relations between India and Nepal have experienced tensions and interdependence that small countries have with their large neighbours. All-encompassing links and constant movement of people across the borders between such states create a sense of deep attachment but also deep resentment. For Nepal, geography gives it a heavy southward-orientation in the economic and political fields. In addition, its foreign trade is largely dependent on access to and through India, not China.

Since a low in bilateral relations in the late-1980s, India has gradually shifted towards a more sympathetic attitude

towards Nepal. For India, the foremost issue with regard to Nepal is China's growing relationship with Kathmandu. China has as much influence and presence in Nepal today as India does, besides being more popular than before. The continuing expansion of Chinese influence in Asia will be felt in Nepal too.

After China, Pakistan figures prominently in New Delhi's major security concerns in respect of Nepal. Many Indians suspect that, over the past two decades or more, Pakistan has been making covert use of the open access to Nepal in order to promote subversive activities against India. Although Pakistan denies any such use of the Nepalese territory, it is believed that, in the past, groups operating from within Pakistan have targeted India through Nepal.

The open Indo-Nepal border is also a matter, perhaps, of opportunity as well. Given its historical importance to both sides, sweeping restrictions on cross-border connectivity would be disadvantageous to both countries. Curtailing illegal trade and other illicit activities, including drug trafficking, money laundering, and circulation of counterfeit currency, would require a degree of regulation and a much-better monitoring across the India-Nepal border.

India's ever-increasing energy requirements may constitute its potentially most important economic

interest in Nepal – the largely untapped hydropower potential. Nepal has an installed hydroelectric capacity of 700 MW, causing an annual shortfall of 450 MW which is only partially covered through imports from India. This has resulted in power-cuts for more than 14 hours a day in the dry season.

Nepal does not have a significant manufacturing base, but its hydroelectric potential can dramatically transform its economy. Nepal does have understandable apprehensions about the inadequacy of its arable land. Politically, therefore, the creation of large water reservoirs, for hydroelectric projects, can be unpopular. Also understandable are Nepal's worries over the prospect of displacing people for the sake of hydroelectric development. Despite a technically feasible and economically viable potential of more than 40,000 MW, the development of Nepal's hydroelectric sector has remained a sensitive political issue.

A major part of the downstream flooding of the Ganga is contributed by flows either originating in Nepal or transiting Nepal from sources in Tibet. Because of the terrain, Nepal provides a good, if not the only, option for downstream flood control and dry season augmentation of water. Well-managed Indo-Nepalese cooperation on the water front could potentially be a good asset for India and its relationship with Nepal.

In fact, the positivity created by Modi's visit to Nepal in August 2014 resulted in the signing of a bilateral agreement in September 2014 in regard to the 900 MW Upper Karnali hydropower project in west Nepal. The Investment Board Nepal and India's GMR-ITD Consortium signed the agreement. Another project development agreement, in respect of Arun III, was signed between the Investment Board Nepal and Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam of India in November 2014. Both Upper Karnali and Arun III will have a generation capacity of 900 MW each and the projects will cost over US\$ 2.4 billion at present market rate. The two governments have also signed a Power Trade Agreement, while the Pancheshwar Development Authority has also been constituted.

India and Nepal signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Motor Vehicles Agreement for Passenger Traffic. The agreement simplifies the procedure for movement of private and non-regular vehicles across the India-Nepal border. This agreement aims to facilitate seamless and hassle-free movement of the people of both countries, promoting tourism. India's Prime Minister flagged off Kathmandu-Delhi bus service, 'Pashupatinath Express', during his latest visit.

Several other agreements and MoUs were also signed. These include the MoU on National Police Academy, cooperation in the area of traditional

medicine, MoU on sister city arrangements, and MoU on cooperation on matters relating to Youth Affairs, among others. In addition, India signed an agreement to operationalise its soft loans of US\$ 1 billion for various Nepali infrastructure projects. Three new international airports – one each at Nijgadh (near Kathmandu), Pokhara and Bhairahawa (to service Lumbini) – are being planned. A new Kathmandu-Terai highway is being fast-tracked, along with the Kathmandu-Hetauda tunnel project.

On the defence side of the Indo-Nepalese ties, Modi fulfilled a long-standing request of the Nepal Army by handing over multi-role and multi-mission Dhruv Advanced Light Helicopter. In a different sector Modi, in an environment-friendly move, presented a mobile soil-testing van to the Government of Nepal. These developments have generated optimism on the Indo-Nepalese front, but it might take a long time and serious efforts to implement the promises.

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Vision of a SHARED FUTURE

RAHUL ADVANI and RINISHA DUTT

Singapore's President, His Excellency Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, launched a special edition of a book on the city-state's relations with India, at a function in New Delhi on 10 February 2015 – in commemoration of 50 years of diplomatic engagement between these two sovereign states. The function was organised by the Singapore-based Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore. Titled 'Singapore and India: Towards a Shared Future', the ISAS' special publication traces the history and organic evolution of the multi-dimensional relationship between the city-state of Singapore and a resurgent India – in the specific context of the current celebration of half-a-century of interactions between these two independent countries.

After the book was unveiled by Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, a copy of the special edition was presented to the Special Guest, India's Railway Minister Suresh Prabhu. Singapore's President later spent some time at an ISAS exhibition,

evinced keen interest in the theme of the book as well as the rare images featured in the volume. The accessibility of the book and its wonderful images, the President believed, would make it a work that could stand the test of time.

The volume's large collection of carefully selected photographs not only accompanies the stories of Singapore-India interactions, but also provides a feast for the eyes. As a visual value-addition, the photographs enable the readers to 'see' the history of the Singapore-India story unfold before their eyes, as it were. A collection of images as large as this, documenting the connections between the two countries, has never been seen before, making this book a first in many ways.

ISAS Chairman Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, in his opening remarks at the book launch function, emphasised the significance of narrating, in words and visuals, the well-established Singapore-India relationship as a marker for the future of their dynamic engagement. At a symposium that served as a preview for this book launch, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai presented a panoramic perspective of the dynamic and growing relationship between Singapore and India.



Singapore's President, Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, at the launch of ISAS publication, 'Singapore and India: Towards a Shared Future', at a function in New Delhi on 10 February 2015.

Photo: By Special Arrangement

The book was conceptualised and produced in about two years' time under the intellectual leadership of ISAS Director, Professor Tan Tai Yong, a distinguished historian and a Nominated Member of Singapore's Parliament. (Excerpts from Professor Tan's speech are featured separately in this ISAS publication).

Former High Commissioner of Singapore to India, Ambassador See Chak Mun, now Senior Research Fellow at ISAS, led the Research Team that produced the book. Other members of the team are ISAS Consultant for this project, Ms Tan Li Jen, and two Research Assistants at ISAS, Mr Rahul Advani and Ms Rinisha Dutt.

The cover page of the book, in full view after it was unveiled, sets the tone for the thematic narrative. Depicting images of Ashoka Chakra and Singapore stars, drawn from the national flags of India and Singapore respectively, the cover page is emblematic of the numerous ways in which collaborations between Singaporeans and Indians have gone beyond the person-to-person interactions to create an impact at the national and international levels.

The resonant message from the launch of this book and the pre-launch symposium is that the future of Singapore-India relationship can be fashioned by sustaining the current focus on diverse sectors and by opening new frontiers of cooperation.

At the symposium which set the stage for the book launch, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai said: "The connections between our countries [Singapore and India], as Professor Tan Tai Yong has revealed in his book, Singapore,



Photo: By Special Arrangement

ISAS Director, Professor Tan Tai Yong speaking at the launch of ISAS publication, 'Singapore and India: Towards a Shared Future', at a function in New Delhi on 10 February 2015.

A 700 year History, is dated well before the arrival of the Europeans, when Indian maritime traders were ubiquitous in the Straits of Malacca. ... Indeed, the very founding of modern Singapore in 1819 was premised on the East India Company's desire to protect its strategic sea-lanes off India's eastern seaboard, and facilitating the burgeoning India-China trade [of that era]. That pivotal event, in turn set in motion the process, which over time led to the establishment of a viable and varied community of Indians on the island [of Singapore]. The migration

of Indians, and with them India's languages, traditions and customs, are probably the most telling reflection of the deep historical ties between our two countries. ... In the second half of the 20th Century, even as Indian nationalism and its nationalist leaders continued to inspire Southeast Asian leaders, interactions between Singapore and India became less resplendent [for a variety of reasons]."

About the bold new renewal of ties between Singapore and India after the dramatic passing of the East-West Cold

"Singapore and India share a long-standing relationship which has been shaped by trade, colonial rule, migration and the struggle for nationhood. Early Indian traders who established trade networks in what is today's Southeast Asia were followed in the nineteenth century by Indian immigrants who were part of the larger Indian diaspora formed under British rule. While it was natural for Indian communities overseas to retain political, cultural, familial and emotional ties to their homeland, those who remained in Singapore after independence became an integral part of the country's social fabric through their contributions to the nation's growth and development".

– Singapore and India: Towards a Shared Future



Photo: By Special Arrangement

Singapore's President, Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, (first from left, in the foreground), accompanied by ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, (standing behind the President), as well as India's Railway Minister, Mr Suresh Prabhu, (wearing a red shirt), and ISAS Director, Professor Tan Tai Yong, (right, in the foreground) at the ISAS exhibition on the book, *Singapore and India: Towards a Shared Future*.

War into the annals of recent history, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai recalled some aspects of this robust bilateral

mood which has been sustained to this day. He said: "The end of the Cold War, along with pressures towards

"Presently, economic, institutional and cultural exchanges are important platforms connecting Singapore and India. The strategic shift towards Asia and ASEAN only took place in the early 1990s and this was articulated in India's Look East policy. This policy resulted in a series of economic reforms which spurred greater collaboration between Singapore and India. In Singapore, concerted efforts were made to promote and broaden knowledge of the Indian subcontinent and the South Asian region. This included the formation of the South Asian Studies Programme at the National University of Singapore in 1999, and the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), a think-tank dedicated to research on contemporary South Asia, in 2004".

– *Singapore and India: Towards a Shared Future*

liberalisation in the context of the deepening globalisation, saw India embark on the painstaking process of economic reform. [India's] declared 'Look East Policy' in 1992 marked the beginning of a new chapter in Singapore-India relations. ... In 1994, [Singapore's] then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, who took a keen interest in India's economic reforms, visited New Delhi. That visit was reciprocated by [India's] PM Narasimha Rao. Such high level exchanges have continued in the new millennium, the latest being [India's] PM Manmohan Singh's visit [to Singapore] in 2011 and [Singapore's] PM Lee Hsien Loong's delegation [to India] in 2012. Indeed, Singapore is recognised as a trusted partner in India's pursuit of

its 'Look East Policy' ... Concomitantly, people-to-people contacts have intensified ... and contributed significantly to Singapore's economic success. Cultural interactions from India to Singapore have consequently increased. ... **Very soon, an Indian Heritage Centre will be opened in Singapore – an institution that will be a testimony to the historical ties and the remarkable relationship [between the two countries]. ... For many of us [like the ISAS] engaged in facilitating relations between our two countries, there is every expectation that Singapore-India relations will deepen and intensify further in time to come".**

Photo: By Special Arrangement



Singapore's President, Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, with two young ISAS researchers (Mr Rahul Advani, first from left, in the foreground, and Ms Rinisha Dutt, first from right, in the foreground) after the ISAS commemorative volume on Singapore-India relations was launched in New Delhi on 10 February 2015.

Singapore's President, Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam's appreciation of the efforts of ISAS, as narrated by Mr Rahul Advani and Ms Rinisha Dutt:

In commending us on our work as co-authors of the book, the President provided us with several comments regarding the worthiness of the book. He noted that the book's chapter on colonial linkages between Singapore and India, for example, was particularly insightful in its coverage of the deep historical ties between the two nations, given the fact that Singapore was ruled by the British through India. The book's section on the Chettiar and Chulia communities who had established an early Indian presence in Singapore was also highlighted as an important read.

The President spoke to us with much enthusiasm about the amount of research that had gone into the writing of the book, considering the limited time and tight deadlines we were given.

The research process involved undertaking a variety of tasks to provide a full picture of the Singapore-India partnership. In particular, special care was taken to showcase the personal stories of the Singaporeans and Indians who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to

make the partnership a successful one.

In order for the book to provide an account that would go beyond the surface, we sourced rare photographs (some of which had never been made publicly available before), travelled around Singapore for fieldwork, delved deep into the literature on Singapore's and India's history, and also conducted numerous interviews with some of the individuals who have made key contributions to the Singapore-India relationship. As a result, we have been able to compile a collection of stories, insights and images that capture both the depth and magnitude of the relationship.

In spite of the limited timeframe that was given for the book's production, the President noted that the timeliness of the book's release on the fiftieth anniversary of Singapore-India diplomatic relations made it a special one. In mentioning that the book was a fantastic way to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary, he shared his hopes that it would not only go a long way in educating Singaporeans about theirs and India's intrinsically connected histories, but that it would also generate further platforms for discussion.

Mr Rahul Advani and Ms Rinisha Dutt are Research Assistants at ISAS. Mr Advani can be contacted at isasra@nus.edu.sg, and Ms Dutt can be contacted at isasrd@nus.edu.sg.

Mr P S Suryanarayana, Editor (Current Affairs) at ISAS, contributed inputs.

A Special PARTNERSHIP

Here are excerpts from the Comments by ISAS Director, PROFESSOR TAN TAI YONG, a distinguished historian and a Nominated Member of Singapore's Parliament, at the launch of ISAS book, *Singapore and India: Towards a Shared Future*, at a function held in New Delhi, on 10 February 2015, to mark the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Singapore and India:



ISAS Director, Professor Tan Tai Yong, (second from right) with other panellists (from left) S D Muni, Professor Emeritus at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi; Chandrajit Banerjee, Director General of the Confederation of Indian Industry; and N K Singh, India's high-ranking former civil servant.

This volume is part-history, part-current affairs. So, let us begin with History. This relationship between India and Singapore did not begin, as this volume shows, in 1965, when Singapore achieved full independence as a nation-state. It could be traced further back, to the early 19th Century, when Singapore and India were connected by the East India Company. As Singapore developed as a colonial port city, it attracted migrants from India who would go on to literally build much of early Singapore. Their labour and craftsmanship would change the architectural and visual landscape of Singapore for ever. ... Successive waves of migration followed, as the early groups of

Work on this volume was started about two years ago, when we, at the Institute of South Asian Studies, were considering how we could play a part in commemorating this landmark anniversary in the relations between our two countries [Singapore and India]. We felt that it was important that the fascinating story of this long-standing relationship be told in its full and multi-faceted richness, and a volume that is able to capture this, in text and pictures, would be an appropriate way to mark the occasion.

"Today, as a businessman, I see global companies drawn to India in much the same way I saw as a boy. They are dazzled by the promise of adventure and extraordinary opportunity. They are intoxicated, even overwhelmed. But as I learned, even as a young boy in India, appearances can be deceiving. For outsiders, there is always a hint of mystery. Even if you live and work there, you can never be entirely sure you understand it. It is best to assume that you do not. If you come to India with some grand, predetermined strategy or master plan, prepare to be distracted, deterred and even demoralized. The key to this success has been learning to see the Indian market as it is, not as we wished it to be."

– Shabbir Hassanbhai, Vice-Chairman of Singapore Business Federation, as quoted in Chapter 3 of *Singapore and India: Towards a Shared Future*.

labourers and traders were followed by skilled and commercial migrants, many of whom continue to run family businesses in Singapore, as knowledge and skills were passed from one generation to the next. Upon these strong historical ties were built firm bilateral relations when India and Singapore became sovereign states. India's first Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, made three official visits to Singapore. His legacy lives on in Singapore ...

Recently, in July 2013, Singapore's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Law, K. Shamugam, visited Nalanda University in Bihar to see its progress first-hand and to reaffirm Singapore's support for the project. The Nalanda University Project was the brainchild of former Indian President Abdul Kalam, who first mooted the idea during his state visit to Singapore in January 2006. Singapore's continued interest in, and support for, the Nalanda project is a sign of the enduring nature of Singapore and India's diplomatic relations. While political relations between the two countries goes back several decades, economic engagement took off much later, after India's economic liberalisation in the 1990s. Up until then, Singapore's investment in India accounted for less

"In sum, and with the exception of a brief cooling-off period, the past 50 years have witnessed a mutually beneficial relationship between the two countries that has to a large extent been built on traditional bonds of friendship facilitated by cultural affinities and Commonwealth links. In recent years, both economic and strategic interests drew the two countries even closer together. Moving forward is indeed a real challenge, particularly when relations between India and Singapore have reached such a high plateau. It demands greater efforts and bolder visions on both sides. Judging by how the bilateral relations have evolved during the past 50 years, however, the future certainly looks bright".

– *Singapore and India: Towards a Shared Future*,
Prospects for India-Singapore Relations.

Photo: Courtesy High Commission of India in Singapore



INS SUDARSHINI, Indian Navy's sail ship, approaching Singapore on 2 March 2015, on a goodwill visit to commemorate 50 years of India-Singapore diplomatic relations. Sailors can be seen manning the mast in a ceremonial fashion.

than 1 per cent of India's investment approvals. The scenario changed significantly after Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and India's Prime Minister Narasimha Rao met on 5 September 1992 during the Non-Aligned Summit in Jakarta where they discussed areas of cooperation. Since then, the economic relationship has become a multi-faceted one. ...

There is also a softer side to this relationship. In one of the book's more interesting chapters, we provide a comprehensive overview of the many

rich connections between Singapore and India in the fields of architecture, music, dance, literature, theatre, art, fashion and food. ... Singapore's relations with India have grown and evolved over time. Singapore has become a popular destination for the modern Indian Diaspora. ... From an annual series of events in Singapore organised by IIM [Indian Institutes of Management] alumni to facilitate educational and economic partnerships between the two countries – to the Singapore International Programme which, among its other initiatives, has sent doctors and nurses from a local hospital to work with their counterparts in medical colleges and hospitals in India – the relationship between India and Singapore has grown many new dimensions.

This commemorative volume attempts to capture the substance and spirit of this long-enduring and special relationship. We tell this story not only through facts and figures, but also through anecdotes, interviews and personal stories that showcase the richness and depth of the Singapore-India partnership and its effects on people's individual lives.

IN REMEMBRANCE



Singapore's founding Prime Minister, MR LEE KUAN YEW (1923 – 2015), at the Dialogue session with the delegates of the South Asian Diaspora Convention, organised by the Institute of South Asian Studies in Singapore on 21 July 2011.

INDIA PAYS TRIBUTE



Photo: Courtesy High Commission of India in Singapore

India's Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, who attended the state funeral of Singapore's founding Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, in Singapore on 29 March 2015, hailed him as "a global thinker".

The passing away of His Excellency Mr Lee Kuan Yew marks the end of an era.

He was among the tallest leaders of our times.

Singapore's transformation in one generation is a tribute to his leadership.

In the 50th anniversary year of Singapore's independence, I am sure that he left satisfied with Singapore's achievements and confident about its future.

He inspired not just Southeast Asia, but all of Asia, to believe in its own destiny.

He was a global thinker, who saw things ahead of others. He was an advocate of economic progress, but also made tireless efforts to advance peace and stability in our region.

In India, we deeply valued his friendship and his support for India's economic progress and global role.

He believed in India's potential more than many of us did.

India's economy is growing rapidly.

India's relations with Singapore is one of our strongest relationships in the world.

India's integration with Southeast Asia and beyond is growing. Singapore is a key pillar of India's Act East Policy.

Personally, he was a source of inspiration for me. His achievements and thoughts give me confidence in the possibility of India's own transformation.

Excerpts from the Tributes paid by Mr Modi. Source: India's Ministry of External Affairs.

Federalism and External OUTREACH

P S SURYANARAYANA

South Asia – an ethno-linguistic mosaic with religious diversity, and an ancient home to the tapestry of an absorptive civilisation – has captured the imagination of peoples across the world through the millennia. In the mid-twentieth century, after the British ended their colonial project in South Asia through Partition, a fleeting notion was that independent India and the newly-created Pakistan could perhaps consider a confederation. However, various political and economic factors have led to the dominance of ideas about exclusive nation-states and sub-national sentiments in South Asia. Within each South Asian state, the practical concepts of federalism, devolution, and decentralisation have variously come to the fore by the mid-2010s. Mr Narendra Modi, India's Prime Minister since May 2014, has even promised to pursue a policy of cooperative federalism to promote harmony between the Centre and the States (i.e. provinces) in his country.

It is in this overarching ambience that the Singapore-based Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) chose, for its 9th International Conference, the resonant political theme of 'The States of South Asia'. In the circumstances, the conference, held in the city state on 13 and 14 November 2014, focused much attention on India and some of its provinces, notably the reconstituted sub-national State of Andhra Pradesh (AP).

Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka

were also in the spotlight for their distinctive intra-national developments and discourses on federalism, unitary statehood, and decentralisation. Obviously, no consensus, cutting across such diverse states and their provinces, was conceivable. Nor was any consensus attempted, with the participants seeking to make sense of the cross-currents of ideas, policies, and passions in play.

Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, gracing the conference dinner on 13 November 2014, identified the focus-areas in the city state's pursuit of foreign economic policy. In particular, he outlined the process by which Singapore had now chosen to explore partnering the reconstituted Indian State of Andhra Pradesh in its efforts to construct a new capital city. (In the months following the ISAS Conference, much progress has been made in the engagement between Singapore and AP in this regard. Significantly, ISAS Chairman Ambassador Gopinath Pillai has been appointed as Singapore's Special Envoy to Andhra Pradesh.)

The 'vision' and 'mission' of Andhra Pradesh in its efforts to re-invent itself as a front-runner among the Indian States were amplified by its Chief Minister, Mr Nara Chandrababu Naidu, in his keynote address on 14 November 2014. Mr S Iswaran, Singapore's Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister for Home Affairs & Trade and Industry, broadly indicated the city state's

approach in engaging with India in general and AP in particular. ISAS Chairman Ambassador Gopinath Pillai presided over the keynote policy-session.

In the main academic session on 13 November 2014, Professor Pratap Bhanu Mehta, President, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, set the tone for discussions on the emerging political and economic trends in Mr Modi's India. ISAS Director Professor Tan Tai Yong presided. Professor Niaz Ahmed Khan from Bangladesh, Dr Aasim Sajjad Akhtar from Pakistan, and Dr Harini Amarasuriya from Sri Lanka spoke about the dynamics in the respective countries with regard to political structures and development agendas. A volume of the proceedings, edited by Associate Professor Rahul Mukherji and Dr Ronojoy Sen of ISAS, is being considered.

In an exclusive interview to ISAS during the conference, Chief Minister Naidu said AP was "very keen" to seek collaboration with Singapore because of its consistent policy and practice of transparency. Emphasising that "they are transparent, and we are also transparent" in policies and practices, he said he was looking for "a structured programme and a total package" of collaboration. Besides the new capital city project, AP would explore other avenues of cooperation with Singapore. Prime Minister Modi had proposed that the Indian embassies could have "commercial administrator(s)" to ensure "better

Photo: By Special Arrangement



ISAS Director Professor Tan Tai Yong (right) presiding over the main academic session of ISAS 9th International Conference on 'The States of South Asia', held in Singapore on 13 November 2014. Professor Pratap Bhanu Mehta, President, Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, spoke on the new dynamics in India under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

[external] connectivity" for the Indian state(s) with "maximum" exposure to the host countries. As an alternative and "if there is a necessity, I will start [an] office here" in Singapore to ensure such connectivity, Mr Naidu indicated.

Asked if India's constituent states should have a say in the country's foreign policy in this globalising world, Mr Naidu said: "Foreign policy – Government of India will look after. ... At the same time now ... compared to foreign policy, economic policy is becoming one of the most important agendas for every government. So, economic agenda means: how to attract investment, how to network, how to have better relations [with foreign countries] ... So, if a [state] government [in India] is able, if a government is sincere, and [is] having

good policy and measures to execute it properly, then [foreign] investments will come".

On whether Mr Modi's Government was now supportive of AP's reach-out to foreign countries, Mr Naidu said: "We [in Andhra Pradesh] are on the forefront, and it is only [a matter of] networking and exploring the possibilities, and explaining the opportunities available in our state. For that, no [Indian] government will have any objection". In fact, Mr Naidu said, his Telugu Desam Party had "fought for many years for the federal spirit" in the domestic Indian context – a campaign which had paved the way for the Sarkaria Commission on Centre-State relations.

Speaking of making Andhra Pradesh "a knowledge state", which could

attract foreign students too, Mr Naidu said he was in touch with eminent persons in the Telugu Diaspora - Dr Raj Reddy, the first ethnic Asian to win the highest global award in Computer Science, and former co-chair of the US President's Information Technology Advisory Committee, besides Mr Satya Nadella, Chief Executive Officer of Microsoft, among many others. Mr Naidu also emphasised that he would look beyond the Telugu Diaspora as well, indeed seek out the "best brains in the [entire] world ... icons" to help him draw up a "master plan" for "best quality education" including "virtual education".

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Poet, Philosopher and POLITICIAN

IFTEKHAR AHMED CHOWDHURY

It is befitting that we celebrate the life and works of one of South Asia's great thinkers, whose impact in uniting a disparate region and polity would be both positive and great, if he is not allowed to slip from our consciousness. Allama Muhammad Iqbal's prodigious contributions to the shaping of the South Asian ethos are at a risk of getting lost.

A towering South Asian personality, Iqbal occupies a rightful place in the pantheon of heroes among the nations of South Asia. Born and bred in the Punjab, he wrote in Urdu and Persian, and was deeply steeped in the culture of the West through his exposure to England and Germany. His intellectual mentors came from both the East and the West: Mowlana Rumi, Sir Thomas Arnold, Friedrich Nietzsche and Wolfgang Goethe. Educated in Lahore, Cambridge and Heidelberg, he wrote for a global audience. His *Payam-i-Mashriq* or 'Message of the East' was a response through poetry to Goethe's *West-Ostlicher Diwan*. The German had bemoaned the pitfalls of Western materialism and Iqbal had answered by underlining the need for fostering feeling, ardour and dynamism.

His philosophical underpinning is indelibly engrained in his *Asrar-e-khudi* or 'Secrets of the Self', perhaps his finest poetic work



Photo: By Special Arrangement

A section of the audience at the ISAS 9th International Conference on 'The States of South Asia', held in Singapore on 13 and 14 November 2014.

written in Persian. He speaks of a divine spark in humanity that enables each of us to reach fruition in self-realisation. The ultimate aim of the ego, he argues, is not to say something but to be something. His verses termed *Shikwa* are a complaint to God for the ills of his community: The *Jawab -I-Shikwa* is meant to be God's response. As one pores through those verses one feels the kind of sensation similar to that one feels while turning the golden pages of Milton's *Areopagitica*.

Iqbal did not reside in the Ivory Tower as

some intellectuals are wont to do but was also a public person. Elected a Member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1926, he advanced the idea of a political formation consisting of a set of Muslim-majority provinces of India, as far back as in 1930. This is why he is said to have been the first to have envisioned 'Pakistan'. The State he dreamed of for the *Ummah* is a far-cry from the fundamentalism as reflected in the actions of the contemporary ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and the Islamicist so-called Caliphate. Like the other great South Asian poet, the mighty Rabindranath Tagore,

Photo: By Special Arrangement



ISAS Principal Research Fellow, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, (centre), author of this article, with Mr Zafar Anjum, (left), author of a book on South Asian poet Iqbal, and Mr P N Balji, journalist and media consultant, at ISAS conference on 'The States of South Asia' in Singapore on 14 November 2014.

Iqbal, too, rejected extreme and divisive nationalism. This is evidenced in his lyrics '*Sarah jahan se achha*' – the best in the entire world, when he speaks of Hindustan. In this, he is like Nazrul Islam, whom Bangladesh accepts as the national poet, who called upon all Indians, irrespective of faith and creed, to awaken, stating that dawn in India will only break out, when its sleeping child awakes: *amra Jodi na jagi Ma kemne shokal hobe: Tomar chhele uthle go ma raat pohabe tobey*: "O, Mother mine, the night will end, and morning will happen, only when we, your children, rise up from our sleep!"

But perhaps the take-away from Iqbal's life was not what he said to nations, though also that, but more what he said to each one of us, individually. In this, he was also like Tagore, who had said, if one wishes to cross the sea, it would not do to stand at its edge and just watch the waters. Action on one's part is essential. Iqbal, too, urged that each of us work to shape our individual future. He famously urged: *Khudi ko kar buland itna, ke*

har taqdeer se pehle, Khuda bandese khud poochhe, bata, teri raza kya hai: "Strengthen your self-will so that God, before determining

your destiny, would himself ask of you, His creature, as to what it should be'. There is no greater recording in literature of the power of human endeavour.

Today we live in a South Asia that is sadly divided. Our own poets and philosophers in the past like Iqbal, as also Tagore and Nazrul, had seen unity in our diversity, had discerned commonalities amidst our differences. So, are the elements that unite us deeper than those that divide? Can we identify those elements and seek to bridge our differences?

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Photo: By Special Arrangement



Associate Professor Rahul Mukherji, (centre) Honorary Senior Fellow and Head (Research) at ISAS – flanked by Associate Professor Gyanesh Kudaisya, (left) South Asian Studies Programme, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore; and Dr Dwaipayan Bhattacharya, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Kolkata (India) – at a session of ISAS 9th International Conference on 'The States of South Asia', held in Singapore on 14 November 2014.

Pakistan Army and Elusive DEMOCRATIC ETHOS

AASIM SAJJAD AKHTAR

The story of Pakistan is, at one level or the other, a story about its army. In fact, the genesis of military power requires a look back into the colonial period. As Tan Tai Yong, and before him Clive Dewey, Imran Ali and others have shown, the Pakistani military's larger-than-life role – and the predominantly Punjabi character of the military – can be explained in large part by the unique social contract established in colonial Punjab from the early decades of the twentieth century.

Not only did Punjabis dominate the British Indian army numerically from at least the First World War onwards, the so-called Punjab school of administration also featured a significant military component. Meanwhile the military was also thoroughly integrated into the socio-economic structures progressively established from the later decades of the nineteenth century, in the form of dozens of cantonments and land grants to military personnel in the so-called canal colonies. Thus by 1947, Punjab and its military had become a major political and economic player in India, both as the granary of the subcontinent and its 'sword-arm'.

Punjab established itself as Pakistan's most powerful province soon after Partition itself; the country's Constituent Assembly was internally conflicted from the very outset, with East Bengal – or

what was then East Pakistan – and Punjab emerging as the two major competing entities within the fledgling federation.

By 1951, East Bengal, which had been a stronghold of the Muslim League in the years leading up to Partition, had become the bastion of anti-Establishment politics, throwing the Muslim League out of power in provincial elections, and regularly protesting against the anti-democratic machinations of the Punjabi military and a predominantly Urdu-speaking bureaucracy. The lack of consensus over the Constitution, the non-holding of elections, the forcible dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, and the eventual formation of the so-called 'One Unit' – a barely disguised attempt to counter East Pakistan's demographic majority – confirmed that the Punjabi- and Urdu-speaking Establishment was none too concerned with the niceties of either democracy or federalism. When elections were finally held in 1970, and the expected Bengali majority came to pass, the Establishment was having none of it. An army action and nine months later, Pakistan became the first – and to date, only – modern nation-state to experience secession by an ethnic majority.

In subsequent decades, the anti-democratic and unitary impulses of

the army have continued to shape the polity, with the tacit support of a cross-section of Punjabi society and its political forces. Most notable have been the army actions against Baloch nationalists in the 1970s and then again since 2004, the Sindh-based Movement for Restoration of Democracy during the Zia dictatorship of the 1980s, and the target killings of hundreds of Pashtun nationalists even while the Pashtun-nationalist Awami National Party (ANP) was in power between 2008 and 2013.

Yet there are indications – on the civilian side of this equation if not the military one – that recognition has dawned within Punjab and amongst mainstream political parties more generally, that meaningful democratisation and establishment of a genuinely federal polity are imperative if the virtually abortive Pakistani nation-building project is to turn over a new leaf.

This cautious optimism has its roots firstly in the so-called Charter of Democracy signed between the country's two biggest parties in 2006 – the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The PML-N had a long history of collusion with the army, mostly on account of its Punjab-centric character. Conversely, the PPP was generally viewed as antagonistic to the Establishment. The agreement between



ISAS Management Board Member, Dr S Nasim, (left) releasing a report on Pakistan's economy, authored by Mr Shahid Javed Burki, (right) Visiting Senior Research Fellow at ISAS, before an ISAS panel discussion on 'Whither Pakistan', in Singapore on 29 August 2014.

While historically political tussles for power have pitted Punjab as a relative monolith against the other provinces, arguably for the first time in Pakistan's history, Punjab is at war with itself, which suggests that the army is no longer able to count on the unified support of its Punjabi heartland, at least to the extent that it did until relatively recently. While the tensions have subsided somewhat in the aftermath of an attack on an army-run school in Peshawar in December 2014, in which more than a hundred children were killed, all indications prior to the attack were that the military leadership was at odds with the prime minister on the basic question of who should make foreign, strategic and economic policies.

the two parties to forever banish the military to the barracks was, therefore, an important development in the story of Pakistani democracy.

This process culminated in 2010 when the parliament – in which the PPP and PML were the two biggest players – passed the 18th Constitutional Amendment, which not only reversed many of the anti-democratic legal manipulations of earlier military dictators, but also decreed a dramatic reduction in the powers of the central government in favour of the provinces.

However, in this same period, another set of developments confirmed just how far Pakistan still is from becoming a genuinely democratic federation. Hundreds if not thousands of Baloch political activists, including students, have disappeared over the past decade, many of whose mutilated bodies were later dumped in public places. Over the past year or so, similar reports have started to emerge from Sindh, albeit with much less frequency. These extra-judicial kidnappings and killings are both cause and consequence of the anti-state sentiments of a growing cross-section of Baloch society. As

such, therefore, the constitutional initiatives taken during the PPP regime of 2008-2013 are considered by Baloch nationalists to be just eyewash, as they clearly cannot reconcile the nominally federal structure with the increasing militarisation of the province.

There is, however, some silver lining in this developing narrative. Between August and December 2014, cricketer-turned politician Imran Khan waged an apparently principled struggle against 'corruption' and for the 'rule of law', holding a dharna outside the Parliament building in Islamabad, along with thousands of supporters.

His principal targets? Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, and the ruling PML-N, which is a Punjab-based party with historic ties to the military. Since 1999, however, when the military overthrew Sharif in a coup, there has been an apparent shift in the posture of the PML-N, a fact that was confirmed by its signing of the Charter of Democracy and helping pass the 18th Amendment. I do not want to overstate the case, but it is in any case true that political alignments, especially in a country like Pakistan, rarely remain static.

Of course simply the fact that there are emergent contradictions within the Punjab and military-centric structure of power does not guarantee that federalism and democracy have a bright future. It is still not possible to rule out direct military intervention, which would necessarily put further strain on an already-fragile federation. Even without direct intervention, recent events in Islamabad have confirmed that the military will continue to project its monopoly claims through covert means.

Perhaps most importantly so long as the military directly controls provinces such as Balochistan, and crucially uses uninhibited force to silence dissent, democracy and federalism will remain a pipe dream, and many non-Punjabis will continue to conceive of Pakistan as a colonial entity bent on keeping them enslaved. We all know where that story might end.

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Optics of GROWTH DATA

AMITENDU PALIT

Thanks to the new GDP (Gross Domestic Product) estimates released by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), India is now among the fastest growing economies in the world. With a growth projection of 7.5% for Financial Year 2014, India should match China in GDP-growth terms, if the advance estimates of the CSO are not revised downward later.

The new methodology adopted by the CSO involves computing GDP on the basis of market prices. This is more consistent with the international practice of computing GDP as employed by most countries. The second important aspect of the new methodology is bringing up the base period for calculating GDP to 2011-12 from the earlier 2005-06. The implication of a change in the base period is that the real GDP, i.e. GDP at constant prices, gets calculated on the basis of a year that had much higher inflation than the earlier base year.

The problems have not been as much with the content of the new methodology as its outcome. A GDP growth of 6.9% in FY 2013, followed by the anticipation of an even higher growth of 7.5% in FY 2014, suddenly leads to a very different story from the 5.5%-5.7% GDP growth that was being

widely expected till the CSO came out with the new numbers at the end of January 2015. Doubts are being expressed over whether the CSO's new numbers represent the actual growth story in an economy where the fundamentals are still not strong enough to produce the kind of growth that it is suggesting.

Fundamentals are indeed yet to back up the new growth story. The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is growing at a lacklustre pace. Decomposed from the supply side, the new growth estimates point to a fairly healthy revival in manufacturing in FY2014, which unfortunately is not borne out by the IIP estimates. Doubts also linger over the robust growth in electricity generation that has been indicated by the new estimates, largely because the power sector is yet to show signs of a vigorous turnaround by generating more electricity through fresh additions to capacity. The IIP does not validate the upturn in electricity.

There are some fairly serious implications of the new numbers. If these numbers are wrong, then they come at a bad time for the Modi Government. Coming right before the embarrassing electoral rout suffered by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in the significant Delhi Assembly

elections, the scepticism expressed over the numbers (including none other than the Reserve Bank of India Governor) did not do the BJP any good. Going ahead, if the gap between the actual state of the economy and the new numbers remains large, faith in the new numbers would erode. That would be further bad news for the Modi Government as it might get criticised for peddling doubtful data for shoring up the image of the economy.

Brownie points might be limited for the Modi Government even if the numbers are eventually accepted as sacrosanct and beyond reproach. That would imply that the economy had begun turning around during the earlier UPA (United Progressive Alliance) Government's tenure itself. A GDP growth of 6.9% in FY2013 would by no means be considered a mean achievement. It would indeed earn plaudits for the efforts made by the UPA government during its last year to boost investment by getting projects going. It might also reflect the entitlement-based high-expenditure social welfare programmes in India, like the rural employment guarantee scheme, in a different light. Most economists in India love to hate these schemes. But rationalising a GDP growth of 6.9% would mean projecting consumption, particularly rural consumption, as a key factor



India's High Commissioner to Singapore, Ms Vijay Thakur Singh, flanked by ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, (centre) and others (from left) Professor C Raja Mohan, Dr Amitendu Palit; (both from ISAS), Mr Tarun Das, Founding Trustee of Ananta Aspen Centre in New Delhi, and former Chief Mentor of the Confederation of Indian Industry; Mr N K Singh, former Member of Rajya Sabha (the Upper House of India's Parliament) and a high ranking former civil servant; and Dr Jahangir Aziz, Chief Asia Economist at JP Morgan, Singapore – after an ISAS panel discussion on India's Budget 2015, in Singapore on 30 March 2015. Dr Amitendu Palit is the author of this article.

which might have kept the economy chugging.

Investments have not begun flowing in as much as the government would have liked. Investors are yet to be turned on by 'Make in India'. They are unlikely to be convinced till the Modi Government is able to deliver on the ground by making India a better place for doing business as well as displaying vision and capability for taking Indian economy to a new high.

The disconnect between the scenario conveyed by the new GDP numbers and the actual economic performance

cast its shadow on the latest Union Budget. It is clear that the government decided, irrespective of what the revised GDP estimates convey, the need of the hour was to encourage investment and also send a clear signal to the investors about the government's intention to accelerate growth. The budget has tried to do so on various fronts. However, notwithstanding the confusion which they might have created, the new numbers helped the budget arithmetic by yielding a lower central fiscal deficit as a percentage of the new GDP.

This was great news for the Finance

Minister at a time when his government had accepted the 14th Finance Commission's recommendations for devolving more funds to states out of the divisible pool of taxes. To the Finance Minister at least, the numbers made much sense, even if less so to others.

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Facing the CHINESE CHALLENGE

DEEPARGHYA MUKHERJEE

The 'Make in India' initiative is a significant announcement of the Narendra Modi Government at the centre. With the Indian manufacturing sector stagnating over time and declining by 0.2% in 2013-14, this initiative can only be said to be long-due to boost investment and production in the country.

India is expected to add 250 million people to the labour force over the next fifteen years, and is currently faced with declining manufacturing activity. A stagnating manufacturing sector, which cannot absorb the new members of the semi-skilled to low-skilled labour force, cannot address unemployment, and this might lead to social unrest. In order to capitalise on the demographic dividend, therefore, India must kick-start the manufacturing sector. In this venture, India's closest competitor is China, which is a recognised global manufacturing-hub. Lately, Chinese products have been flooding the Indian market. India thus faces a tough challenge to scale up its own activities and compete with China in both the domestic and foreign markets. A thriving manufacturing sector has the potential to increase employment of large sections of the population, apart from improving India's position in the world markets. It is in this context that the 'Make in India' initiative is a very welcome move.

The initiative is geared to attract resource-seeking foreign investments, as it covers sectors where India exports favourably to the world (like textiles and automobiles) as well as infrastructure, port connectivity, primary resources and processing. The relevant website has details of addressing most concerns that foreign investors would have in mind. Various other steps – like a one-stop counter for approvals, a single-window IT (information technology) platform, integrating all central government departments – amount to a first-time initiative that would simplify doing business in India – like never before.

As this is written, India has experienced a surge in foreign institutional investments (FIIs) but no significant increase in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) since the launch of the 'Make in India' campaign. A higher FDI flow is what India needs to turn the wheels of its manufacturing sector. India has, however, fared poorly as a

prospective investment-destination, ranking 142 in the 'doing business index' published by the World Bank. India's rank is behind those of all its Asian neighbours like Pakistan, China, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. India's Prime Minister has announced that he intends to bring the country into the top-50 category in this regard.

Apart from corruption and lengthy approval processes, India's archaic labour laws have often militated against investments in the manufacturing sector. Compared to these, Chinese laws are employer-friendly.

Looking at the global scenario, the world is not as bullish as it used to be ten-to-fifteen years ago when China was riding the wave. Now, China itself is on the brink of losing its long-held advantages of cheap labour and resources. So, the need for global corporations to find cheap manufacturing-destinations has been building up. India stands to fill this



Photo: By Special Arrangement

ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, (centre) presiding over a panel discussion and book launch, co-organised by ISAS and several other organisations in Singapore on 14 July 2014. ISAS Management Board Member, Mr Girija Pande, (second from left) is a co-author of the book, 'The Silk Road Rediscovered: How Indian and Chinese Companies Are Becoming Globally Stronger by Winning in Each Other's Markets' – a topic relevant to India's latest 'Make in India' campaign.

gap. However, India's growth prospects, through access to the global markets, would be less promising than what China has enjoyed. It is also important to note that China has itself launched a 'Made in China' campaign to retain its supremacy as the global manufacturing hub.

The Chinese initiative is specially targeted towards building research-and-development potential. Special taxation reliefs have been rolled out for the installation of productivity-enhancing machinery and R&D equipment. Needless to say, China has been promoting indigenous innovation as well over the last few years. India cannot be oblivious to innovation and yet expect to make a longer-term success of the 'Make in India' initiative.

A vision for Future India should include promoting domestic entrepreneurship and a culture of innovation and research which have played key roles in the sustainable development of most

countries in the world. Inviting foreign investors to exploit India's resources could also see India touch record levels of environmental damage and pollution just as those being experienced by China today. Promoting innovation would require strict intellectual property laws in line with the best in the world. The Chinese IPR laws are already better-aligned in this respect.

Although the BigPharma paints a discouraging picture about Indian IPR laws, especially after the Novartis judgement in 2013, several judgments by Indian courts show India's commitment towards recognising true innovation. During Prime Minister Modi's recent trip to the United States, the two countries agreed to form an "annual high level, intellectual property working group". This working group should be utilised by India to actively dispel misconceptions about its IPR commitments, if any, rather than simply acceding to the demands of the US. The working group may help in developing a culture of research and

innovation in corporate India, starting with appropriate incentives for the US' multinational corporations to set up product-development R&D centres in India. The formulation of a FDI policy, linked incrementally to technology-transfer and generation of intellectual property in India by foreign MNCs, should be taken seriously.

In order to compete with the Chinese Juggernaut, with a vision to be an economic superpower, India not only requires an immediate restructuring of laws but also the promotion of domestic entrepreneurship. While a few management schools already provide incubation centres for fresh start-ups, the initiative needs to gather greater steam.

In sum, the 'Make in India' initiative is a welcome move for the Indian economy. However, it requires to be complemented with amendments to stringent laws that have restricted the growth of Indian manufacturing. It is also a time where India needs to take a bigger step in competing with China by concentrating on encouraging domestic entrepreneurship, and by moving up the learning-curve through research and innovation to establish itself strongly on the international stage as an economic superpower of the new millennium.

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Focus On 'INCLUSIVE' AFGHANISTAN

JAYANT SINGH



Two of the co-authors of ISAS book, 'Afghanistan: The Next Phase' – Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, (left) and Professor Riaz Hassan, (right) with Dr Michael Kugelman, Senior Program Associate in the Asia Program of the Wilson Center (US), at a panel discussion on the book, in Washington DC on 25 March 2015.

Photo: By Special Arrangement

On 25 March 2015, the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) launched its latest publication *'Afghanistan: The Next Phase'* at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington DC, United States of America. Authored by senior ISAS scholars, Mr Shahid Javed Burki, Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, and Professor Riaz Hassan, the book paints an illuminating picture of the evolving situation in Afghanistan. Being timely as well, *Afghanistan: The Next Phase* is a worthy addition to the current body of literature on Afghanistan. Even as the book was launched in Washington, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani was making his first visit to the US as head of state. This underscored

Afghanistan's enduring strategic relevance to the West despite the drawdown by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) troops in 2014. America's longest military engagement since Vietnam might be coming to an end, but the war yet continues. The legacy that the international coalition fought so hard to establish remains under threat and might be tested by the Taliban 'spring offensive'.

With the 'retrograde' process complete, American footprint in Afghanistan is the smallest it has been in the last ten years. As the distance between Washington and Kabul grows, regional stakeholders must fill the vacuum and share responsibility for Afghan stability. It is clear that as the situation evolves it will have wide-ranging consequences not just for Afghanistan but rather for much of South Asia. Afghanistan's South Asian neighbours – India and Pakistan – must work with, rather than against, each other in creating a favourable environment for the country. A policy of fashioning solutions in single domains would improve Indo-Pak engagement on Afghanistan and create an environment where cooperation is not constrained by a host of other issues where India and Pakistan do not see eye-to-eye.

In many respects, 2014 was an important year for Afghanistan. The *inteqal*, or security transition, was followed by the much awaited – yet long drawn-out – political transition. The new power-sharing agreement will have wide-ranging effects on how Afghanistan will be governed. As Afghanistan's transition continues the outcome remains uncertain. *Afghanistan: The Next Phase* is an exercise in ascertaining how to ensure a successful outcome in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan: The Next Phase traces the rise of the Taliban and draws a correlation between the present situation and the Bonn sponsored efforts for political and economic restructuring. Above all else, the book argues for an inclusive and representative political system – one that brings together several segments of society – as a way out of an extremely complicated political situation. The assessment offered by the book has much relevance for policy makers and thought leaders. For others, too, the book sheds light on a region of the world that is undergoing a period of extreme uncertainty.

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Awe and Inspiration

Ms Tan Tse Tseng, Trendy

As a fourth-year undergraduate with a background in History and some exposure to India Studies, I initially experienced a mild culture-shock at ISAS. No course in the University would have been sufficient to prepare me for the contemporary and fast-moving nature of events surrounding South Asia, even though I had taken a few classes which dealt with its more recent developments.

In my first week, I was fortunate to have been invited to the Institute's annual staff retreat, where, as a part of the programme, senior research fellows

presented a wide range of topics that they would explore in the coming year. I was inspired by the passion and dedication of the researchers as they outlined their respective interests. This broadened my understanding of the current issues that the region faces.

I also appreciated the Researchers' Meetings where candid opinions were expressed, especially on the then recently-elected Indian Government. Having enjoyed the opportunity to attend multiple seminars and in-house discussions – which featured both established and up-and-coming

academics, bureaucrats and politicians – I should mention, in particular, the seminars on "Post-Election Prospects for India" and "Who will Change Pakistan? – How Class, Ethnicity and Demography will Shape Pakistan's Future".

Throughout my time at ISAS, the researchers and staff were very warm and welcoming despite my short stay. I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for facilitating my stay, sharing with me their insights on the region and my research, and for their experiences.

This internship has certainly challenged my perceptions of South Asia and compelled me to look wider and deeper beyond the dominant themes taught in the classroom. This has greatly enhanced my appreciation for the intricacies and complexities of the region. Thank you ISAS!

Skills and Values

Ms Sharmeela Begum D/O Jainlavudin

The internship I did for two months at ISAS has taught me numerous skills at doing research. I also learnt a lot about academic values, besides coming to know about the way a think tank works. With my knowledge of South Asia expanding, I would indeed love to continue researching on the affairs of this region.

Among the skills I have picked up at ISAS are: how to interact with people and how to conduct interviews. I have also come to appreciate the values of punctuality and researching passionately. Being accustomed, earlier, to just finding answers to a question or a topic in order to finish writing an essay, this internship has taught me that, to

write a proper research paper, one has to do a lot of reading and should always be ready to broaden one's thinking and perspective. A research paper is useful only if there is some new information or if it adds to the current knowledge: reproducing others' work in one's own words is useless and a waste of time.

Moreover, the meetings and seminars at ISAS, addressed by important people, have broadened my mind and taught me how to engage in valuable discussion. I cherish my time at ISAS.

A Second Classroom

Ms Gowry D/O Chandra Segaran

Coming from a background of life sciences and history, as an undergraduate, my knowledge of South Asia was limited to that gained through a few modules I had studied. From the very first ISAS seminar I attended, my understanding of the region quickly expanded. It was especially interesting to hear Dr Duvvuri Subbarao and Dr Aasim Sajjad Akhtar speak about India and Pakistan respectively. The ISAS seminars have sparked my interest in the governance and social conditions of the people in South Asia.

When I first arrived at ISAS, I noticed a high degree of interest in India's 2014 general election. I was amazed at the researchers' knowledge of the region, their resourcefulness and access to the latest information not commonly found in published literature. These added depth to their discourse, and they would readily share their knowledge. In this respect, my stay at ISAS has been beneficial.

I was also privileged to participate in a 'work plan retreat', along with the staff

of ISAS. It was a well-organised event, which served as an eye-opener for me to know about the operations of a prominent think tank. It was fascinating to hear about the research fellows' upcoming projects and the reasons why they had chosen to focus on certain topics. The research areas so chosen highlighted the unique ability of ISAS to bridge the gap between South Asia and Southeast Asia. Indeed, an internship at this institute has introduced me to the world of academia and expanded my understanding of international relations.

Prior to my internship at ISAS, I was oblivious to the happenings and developments in South Asia. After having gained an understanding of South Asia and its integral position in the world, I look upon my time at ISAS as a second classroom, apart from school, and I have gained much from this experience.

Useful Insights

Mr Syed Ashratullah S/O Syed Sebakhatulla

My experiences as an Intern at ISAS gave me an insight into how think tanks work and operate in Singapore. The main tasks assigned to me at ISAS were to research and write a paper about a major issue in the South Asian region and to attend all meetings and seminars at the Institute. After consulting my supervisor, I decided to write a paper on India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

recent visits to Australia and the United States. My supervisor guided me on how to address the topic.

I have also learnt how research is conducted and how data must be gathered and used in research papers. This is a crucial skill for an Honours student like me, and it might be useful in my professional career as well. ISAS

has given me insights into the South Asian region, especially on how policies and strategies are crafted in the South Asian countries. This has certainly sparked my interest in South Asia, in particular India.

The seminars and meetings at ISAS expanded my knowledge about the region and gave me an idea about how decision makers would think and decide on various issues. ISAS Chairman Ambassador Gopinath Pillai's meetings with researchers were my favourite highlight of this internship. Discussions during these meetings have certainly been the eye-opener for me about how much South Asia is important in the global arena. Overall, my time at ISAS was delightful.

Candid Conversations

Mr Lau Yee Ler

I arrived at ISAS in February 2014 after having spent close to six months during the latter half of 2013 as an exchange student in New Delhi. I was brimming with excitement about all things South Asia, and ISAS seemed the natural destination for me to continue my research interest in India, in particular on the youth and the middle class of India today.

My vision of South Asia was quickly thrown wide open at the first researchers' meeting, as they shared views freely about their work and the latest developments in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Myanmar,

amongst others. India, while remaining a central focus of the work done at ISAS, could not be understood fully without a proper appreciation of the South Asian region as a whole. Such an approach encouraged me to develop a broadness of mind that challenged my initial understanding of India and its neighbours. I gained a lot from the ISAS researchers who had freshly returned from the field. This was especially pertinent during the months leading up to the General Election in India that began in April 2014.

In addition, the many workshops and closed-door discussions that ISAS

organised opened my eyes to the latest scholarship emerging not only from Singapore and South Asia, but also from further afield in Canada, the United States, and Australia. These events featured high-level politicians and bureaucrats from South Asia, young Members of Parliament and Members of (State) Legislative Assemblies from India, as well as researchers from across the world. I particularly enjoyed the sessions on 'India's Employment Challenges' and 'Youth, Social Change and Politics in India Today'. The frank discussions took place with little formalities and hierarchy, encouraging me to participate through queries and comments. It was precisely this close access to knowledge that made my internship experience more personal and fruitful. However, my time at ISAS has made me more confused about the intricacies of politics and society in South Asia. However, it is only through such confusion that I will be provoked to become even more inquisitive about the region.

Air of Intense Research

Ms Priscilla Ann Vincent

I had the opportunity to do internship at the Institute of South Asian Studies from May to August 2014. With the support of ISAS, I made a research trip to Karnataka in India. The trip was for two months. The exploratory study enabled me to immerse myself in the politics of primary school governance. While based in the district of Mysore, I met various stakeholders in the delivery of

education such as district- and block-level education officials, head masters, panchayat members, teachers and villagers. I visited eight village schools to gather both qualitative and quantitative data on factors influencing the performance of teachers in government primary schools in rural India.

I am grateful for the opportunity that

ISAS has provided, as I have gained tremendous contacts and insights while in the field, including an understanding of the social, economic and political aspects of the village scene at a sub-national level in India. While at ISAS, I also had the opportunity of attending its events and weekly staff meetings. These provided valuable insights into current happenings in South Asia. Also, the staff members at ISAS have been incredibly supportive and always available for advice, even when I was in the field and had encountered obstacles. The intense research environment of ISAS has certainly challenged and encouraged me to contribute meaningfully to the understanding of the delivery of education in India.

Photographs of KEY EVENTS



India's Finance Minister, Mr Arun Jaitley, (centre, in the foreground) with ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, (left, in the foreground) at 'The Growth Net' conference in New Delhi on 26 and 27 March 2015.

Photo: By Special Arrangement



Mr Sashi Kant Sharma, (left) India's Comptroller and Auditor General, answering questions after delivering an ISAS Public Lecture in Singapore on 16 February 2015. Dr Duvvuri Subbarao, former Governor of Reserve Bank of India, and Distinguished Visiting Fellow at ISAS, presided.



Panelists at an ISAS Forum on PM Modi's Government, in Singapore, on 25 July 2014: (from left) Mr Suresh Prabhu, Chairperson, Council for Energy, Environment and Water (before he became India's Railway Minister); Mr Arun Shourie, author, scholar, and formerly a journalist as well as a Union Minister and a parliamentarian in India; ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, and Mr Jairam Ramesh, Member of Parliament and a former Union Minister in India.



Dr David Malone, (right) United Nations Under-Secretary General, with Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Principal Research Fellow at ISAS, at an ISAS seminar on 18 September 2014.



Dr Munawwar Alam, (left) Advisor at the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, speaking on Pakistan's experiences in decentralisation and civil service reforms, at a collaborative event at ISAS in Singapore on 12 September 2014. Top UNDP official, Mr Max Everest-Phillips, presided.



▲ Singapore's Ambassador to Kuwait, Zainul Abidin Rasheed, (holding the book he launched) flanked by ISAS Director Professor Tan Tai Yong (second from left) and other senior ISAS scholars (from left) Professor Riaz Hassan, Dr Ronojoy Sen, and Professor Robin Jeffrey, at the panel discussion on the book, 'Being Muslim in South Asia: Diversity and Daily Life', in Singapore on 22 August 2014. The book was co-edited by Professor Jeffrey and Dr Sen.



▲ Mr Jamshyd Godrej addressing the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) Roundtable on 'Diaspora in Business and Society', organised by ISAS in Singapore on 27 November 2014. ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, presided.



▲ India's High Commissioner to Singapore, Ms Vijay Thakur Singh, (left) with (from right) ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai; Head of South Asian Studies Programme (SASP) at the National University of Singapore, Professor Vineetha Sinha; Singapore's Ambassador to Jordan, Mr K Kesavapany; and Associate Professor Rajesh Rai, ISAS Assistant Director and Senior Research Fellow, after the launch of Dr Rai's book, 'Indians in Singapore, 1819-1945: Diaspora in the Colonial Port City', at an SASP-ISAS even in Singapore on 26 September 2014.



▲ Ms Smita Nagdev playing on sitar at an ISAS event in Singapore on 22 January 2015.



▲ Professor Yogendra Yadav of India's Aam Aadmi Party speaking at an ISAS seminar on 22 August 2014.

▲ India's former Comptroller and Auditor General, Mr Vinod Rai, (left) with ISAS Senior Research Fellow, Dr Amitendu Palit, at an ISAS seminar on governance issues in India, held in Singapore on 16 October 2014.



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The Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), established in July 2004, is an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore. ISAS is dedicated to the study of contemporary South Asia. Researchers at the Institute conduct long-term and in-depth studies focused on social, political and economic trends and developments in South Asia and their impact beyond the immediate region. In addition, ISAS produces regular up-to-date and time-sensitive analyses of key issues and events in South Asia. ISAS disseminates its research output to policy makers, the academia, business community and civil society.

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