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Director's Message



The last few months have seen mixed developments in South Asia. There has been bad news in the form of unexpected natural disasters of gigantic proportions. On the other hand, there has been good news as well both on the economic and political fronts that have created fresh optimism about the region's future prospects.

Recent floods in Pakistan have wrecked havoc in the country causing widespread damage to lives and property. The catastrophe could not have occurred at a worse time for Pakistan, which is struggling to cope with multiple challenges ranging from terrorism to economic slowdown. The international community has rallied behind Pakistan in one of its darkest hours. Nonetheless, it will take considerable time for the affected areas to return to functional normalcy. Substantial infrastructure needs to be rebuilt. The floods have also damaged crops creating shortages and pushing up food prices. These are vulnerabilities that offer new opportunities to fundamentalists. One hopes that Pakistan will recover quickly from the tragedy and will ensure that disruptive forces do not exploit the current situation for destabilising the Pakistani state.

After enormous negative publicity, India managed to pull off the 19th Commonwealth Games without major embarrassments. While that and the country's improved performance in the competition were major positives, India's ability to organise large-scale sporting events remains under the radar. Indian authorities were surely relieved by the fact that not only did infrastructural pitfalls not surface during the Games, security concerns over terrorists targeting the event also did not materialise. There were also tensions over the Allahabad High Court's verdict on the Ayodhya dispute, which is a religiously sensitive issue. India remained calm after the pronouncement of the judgement. The safe passage of the Commonwealth Games, peaceful acceptance of the Ayodhya verdict, and the 8.5 per cent growth in gross domestic product, convey positive impressions over India's political and economic stability. India is set to deepen links with Southeast Asia by signing a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with Malaysia. Finally, the United States President's visit that signalled continuation of robust India-US ties, was also a positive step forward for India in the diplomatic and strategic sphere.

Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are relishing their new found political stabilities. Bangladesh is poised for a stable growth path with political disruptions appearing to be features of the distant past. Several months have passed after the last Presidential elections in Sri Lanka, with the new regime pursuing reconstruction activities with a lot of vigour. Investors' interest is picking up in Sri Lanka, which is a good sign for the country that has a lot of economic potential but which has not been able to realise it due to a long history of ethnic conflict.

ISAS has been actively tracking the developments in the region with a keen eye on political, economic and strategic ramifications. It has also been connecting with academic institutes and research centres in different parts of the world. ISAS organised a roundtable on 'India's Look East Policy' at the latest conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia at University of Adelaide and also held a workshop on the same subject at the Australia-India Institute in the University of Melbourne. It has recently signing Memoranda of Understanding with the ICA (India-China-America) Institute, Atlanta and the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi.

The institute is in the process of developing an exhaustive research and dissemination agenda for next year. I thank you for your continued support and feedback, and look forward to connecting with you with more updates in the new year.

Warmest regards
Tan Tai Yong

Editorial Information

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Floods in Pakistan

Rajshree Jetly
Research Fellow

Pakistan has recently witnessed one of the worst floods in its 80-year history. The Asian monsoon this year dropped an unprecedented amount of rain in the Indus basin, inundating great swathes of land in Pakistan. Affecting all the four provinces in the country, the floods which started on 22 July 2010, spread from the province of Baluchistan to the province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in the North West, before hitting the southern states of Punjab and Sindh. The size of the affected area is mind-boggling with estimates putting the flooded region between one-fifth and one-third of the country.

As of August 2010, according to United Nations (UN) reports, the floods had claimed 1,600 lives and affected another 14 million people. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) labelled the floods as 'worse than the 2004 tsunami, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake and the Haiti earthquake'. To put it in perspective, the 2005 earthquake affected three million people; the tsunami affected five million; and the Haiti earthquake affected three million people. The number of people impacted by the floods in Pakistan ranges between 14 and 20 million. These figures were expected to rise as more rain was expected, unleashing a possible second wave of death and destruction.

In addition to the loss of human lives and the magnitude of suffering, major damage has been afflicted on the infrastructure for transportation and energy as well as public buildings and private homes. The destruction or disruptions to road and rail transport, apart from adding to the long-term costs of reconstruction, have severely impaired the relief effort. The closure of some power plants and gas fields have resulted in acute power shortages in a country where power supply is already a luxury. While floods of such a magnitude are devastating under any circumstances, this natural disaster is especially disastrous in a country like Pakistan that is battling Islamist insurgency on its home turf with a fragile civilian government and a weak economy.

Flood Fallout

As with all natural disasters, the challenge lies not just in dealing with the disaster but in addressing the issues that emerge after the danger has abated. A major concern for Pakistan is how it deals with the current and post-flood scenario. There are a number of urgent areas of concern, mainly shelter,



Villagers returning to flooded habitats with drinking water

disease prevention, food supply and social stability. Natural disasters invariably result in sanitation problems and the spread of disease. Floods exacerbate this by adding water-borne diseases to the milieu, owing to the collection of flood water in sewage and other places. The first reported case of cholera was confirmed on 14 August 2010 in the Swat Valley and the disease is expected to become more rampant in the coming months. OCHA estimated that up to six million people, mostly children and infants, were at high risk of contracting water-borne diseases such as cholera, typhoid and dysentery.

The other big challenge is an impending food crisis. The floods have wiped out about 17 million acres of Pakistan's most fertile lands. This has a double impact in Pakistan, as agriculture remains the mainstay of Pakistan's economy with as many as two-thirds of the people depending on it. The loss of food crops and livestock reduces the availability of food to the masses. Added to that, large amounts of stored grains and food have also been swept away or destroyed in the floods, especially in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. There is also a secondary effect as the food shortage causes severe price inflation making food unaffordable to the poor outside the areas affected by the floods. As always, the poor are the hardest hit. The floods have already added two per cent to the rate of inflation, pushing it from 9.2 per cent to 11.5 per cent. Shortage of food, water and medical supplies are already exerting pressure on the social fabric, with reports of pillaging and looting becoming rampant.

Economically, the loss of cash crops, including cotton, rice, sugarcane and wheat has been devastating. Pakistan remains the third biggest producer of wheat and the fourth largest cultivator of cotton in Asia, and this loss will be significant. The Punjab province, where the bulk of wheat and cotton are produced, saw over 1.4 million acres of crops destroyed. Damage to the cotton crop will cost Pakistan dearly in the form of the textile industry. According to the Economic Intelligence Report, there could be a drop of as much as 10-15 per cent in farm output in the year 2010-2011 due to the floods. The lost production of food and cash crops as well as the related manufacturing output, coupled with the increased imports necessary to provide food and basic needs have led to a growing trade deficit. Inflationary pressures have forced the Central Bank to raise the interest rate from 12.5 percent in July 2010 to 13.0 percent.

The lack of an effective response to alleviate the crisis and bring some relief in terms of immediate access to water, food and shelter has added to social unrest in an already unstable social order, tugged in different directions by militancy and political instability. The rise of religious extremism is by far the gravest challenge that Pakistan is facing today, especially in the border lands and in Punjab. Local organisations, which have strong networks in the flood affected regions, have moved swiftly to provide medical and relief assistance to the people. Many of these organisations have strong militant or terrorist leanings. These groups are exploiting the crisis to win the hearts and minds of those affected by the floods; they appear to be far more successful at this than the United States (US) despite the billions of dollars Washington has poured into Pakistan.

Some of these organisations such as the Jamaat-ud-Dawah, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Sipah-e-Sahaba and Harkatul Mujahideen are engaged in relief operations, and are providing food and medical facilities to the survivors. The Jamaat-ud-Dawah works under the name of Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation Pakistan, and has set up relief camps in different parts of the country. The fact is that these organisations, through their charitable networks and agencies, are able to dispense aid more effectively and quickly than the government agencies. The irony is that these organisations are spreading more than food, water and medicines in the disaster areas. Apart from disease, the floods may well prove to be a fertile breeding ground for future militants and fundamentalist ideology.

Responding to the Crisis

Even before the floods, Pakistan lacked proper infrastructure and effective disaster management system. The recent devastation of roads, bridges and communication networks by the floods had made it even harder for the government to disburse aid and carry out rehabilitation efforts. The inability of the government to effectively help its own people in this hour of need had contributed to feelings of anger and resentment, which are feeding social unrest. This is highly dangerous given that there are existing internal issues of religious-sectarian tension and ethnic disturbances in some regions, especially Baluchistan. This combination makes for a potentially volatile situation for a government that is still finding its feet after assuming power in 2008.

The floods have hit many of the Taliban stronghold areas where the government has been engaging in a battle against extremists. The military has made many strides against the Taliban but all this could unravel if the government started to lose credibility in the eyes of the people. The Pakistan military has over 60,000 troops stationed for disaster relief but their capacity will be tested if the process of rehabilitation drags on. Delays in rehabilitating people could result in a strong public backlash against the government, whilst earning sympathy for the militant organisations. Some Taliban leaders have said that the floods are divine punishment for Pakistan as its people had chosen a secular government. The fact that the floods have occurred during a period when religious extremism has been on the rise in Pakistan and has affected the Taliban areas is an irony that seems to be lost on these people. These militants are also willing to sacrifice their fellow citizens on the altar of their political ideology by calling on the government to reject aid by Western powers.

Dealing with these challenges has been compounded further by the delay in procurement of international funds for provision of clean water, medical relief, food and shelter for the flood ravaged areas. In the early days of the crisis there was an

apparent lethargy in the movement of funds to Pakistan, prompting Pakistani leaders in Pakistan and abroad to complain about the discriminatory treatment dished out by the international committee, comparing the speedy and generous donations to Haiti after the earthquake and to the countries affected by the 2004 tsunami.

There are a number of reasons which may explain the slow start. Calamities tend to be measured in human lives lost and the number who died in the Pakistani floods was relatively small at 1,600 (as in August 2010) compared to the estimated 250,000 who perished in the 2004 tsunami. The Pakistani crisis did not receive intense media coverage and lacked patronage from major political figures and celebrities, who are often instrumental in highlighting the human face of the crisis. Pakistan also suffers from what journalists have described as an 'image deficit'; it has been at the epicentre of global terrorism and has recently been in the spotlight as more and more evidence has been revealed linking the extent of the linkages between terrorist organisations and the intelligence service.

The international committee may well be concerned that aid money may be diverted into supporting militant activities. Add to that the perception of rampant corruption in Pakistan and there is little confidence that aid money will go to the victims. Pakistan's record is also against it; since 2001, it has received billions of dollars in aid to fight terrorism and it has not succeeded in wiping out the terrorist organisations that operated within its territory.

However, much of the fear of the Pakistan politicians that the international committee was abandoning it has proved to be wrong; once the gravity of the situation was fully appreciated, international funds have poured in. As of 20 August 2010, more than US\$800 million have been committed with the expectation of more funds flowing in the coming months. At the forefront of donors were the US, Saudi Arabia, European Union and the United Kingdom (UK). According to the figures compiled by OCHA, as of 25 August 2010, the US was in the lead commanding 25.1 per cent

of humanitarian assistance followed by Saudi Arabia (12.0 per cent); UK (10.4 per cent); and the European Commission (8.7 per cent). Many other countries have also contributed, including Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Germany and Japan. Another contributor has been India, although the political situation between the two countries has prevented better and greater assistance from India.

The humanitarian crisis caused by the floods is enormous. National and international leaders must strive to get beyond political considerations and strategic interests to focus on the need of the victims of the floods. The scale of the crisis is such that Pakistan is simply unable to deal with it on its own; it is imperative that the world comes to Pakistan's rescue. While there were signs at the beginning that the world was slow to respond, that has changed as the international community began to understand the enormity of the crisis. Money has poured in and international organisations including the UN, International Monetary Fund and World Bank have gone into high gear.

Regionally, a lot more can be done by India and other SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) countries to help Pakistan deal with the flood situation. Pakistan's acceptance of India's US\$5 million in aid is a welcome gesture towards improving the overall climate of trust between the two countries. Bangladesh has also offered a modest amount of relief and humanitarian assistance to Pakistan. However, more importantly, Bangladesh has a wealth of experience in flood management, as well as expertise in dealing with flood crisis and reconstruction which would be extremely valuable for Pakistan. This kind of crisis calls for strong leadership from SAARC, which as a regional forum, has great potential to serve as a platform for sharing technical knowledge and coordinating regional relief efforts and disaster management. This is a time to go beyond political difference and focus on goodwill, mutual trust and the interests of the millions of men women and children who are in dire straits as a result of these floods. ■



Pakistani flood victims reach for food handouts



Mamata Banerjee addressing an election rally

Looking Ahead to India's Four State Elections

Ronojoy Sen
Visiting Research Fellow

The Commonwealth Games – both the eventful run-up as well as the event itself – has largely blanked out from newspaper headlines and primetime television a series of key Assembly elections that will be held in the states of Bihar, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala over the next year or so. Though these polls are unlikely to have a direct impact on the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government at the Centre, they will be a test of organisational strength and the popularity of the ruling combine – the Congress Party and its key allies such as the Trinamool Congress and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) – in four states with very different political dynamics and equations.

The popularity rating of the UPA government – particularly that of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh – has been hit by rising prices and Maoist violence. What is worrying for the government is the pessimism of voters only 14 months after it took over in July 2009. According to an opinion poll conducted by the popular news magazine, *India Today*, in August 2010 some 34 per cent of the people surveyed saw the economic situation getting worse and 28 per cent felt that the government's handling of internal security was poor. The flipside, however, is that voters still rate the incumbent government higher than its only real alternative – the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led

National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Besides the short-run considerations, the elections will be significant in helping to analyse some long-run trends of Indian politics: the effect of anti-incumbency, the strength of the Congress in states where it has been marginalised, the future of the Left parties and the issues that animate voters in state-level elections.

Bihar

First off the blocks was Bihar where the elections were held in three phases from 18 October to 19 November 2010. The importance of Bihar, one of the largest as well as among the worst governed states of India, cannot be stressed. But things have changed for the better over the last five years under Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. Kumar's party, the Janata Dal (United) [JD(U)], rode to power in the 2005 Assembly election as part of an alliance with the BJP. The JD(U) was the senior partner with 88 seats to BJP's 55 in the Bihar Assembly which has strength of 243 seats. After years of stagnation, Kumar seems to have engineered a turnaround in Bihar. The 2009 National Election Survey (NES), conducted by Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), reports that Nitish was the most highly rated Chief Minister in India with 61 per cent of respondents naming him as their choice for the post. Many believe that the good showing of JD(U) in Bihar

in the last general elections, where it won 20 of the 40 Lok Sabha seats and bucked the anti-incumbency trend, was a direct outcome of Kumar's good performance. According to the NES, it was the chief minister's 'clean image and his agenda of good governance' that tipped the scales in favour of the JD(U)-BJP combine. Of course, in Bihar the winning parties also have to get their caste arithmetic right. Here too the JD(U)-BJP alliance was spot on in the general elections. They not only held on to their traditional base of upper castes and the Kurmis and Koeris, but they also won a large chunk of the Most Backward Caste votes, which account for nearly a quarter of Bihar's electorate.

In the coming Assembly election, the main challengers to Nitish Kumar will be the Rashtriya Janata Dal, led by former Bihar Chief Minister and one-time railway minister Lalu Yadav, and the Ram Vilas Paswan-led Lok Janashakti party, both of whom have already announced a seat-sharing deal. Also in the fray will be the Congress, which is looking to regain lost ground in Bihar, and the Left parties making it a multi-cornered contest. A divided opposition will of course work to the benefit of the Nitish Kumar government, which anyway has plenty to show for during the period it has been in government.

West Bengal

Elections to Bihar's neighbouring state, West Bengal, scheduled for mid-2011, are likely to be much more of a volatile affair. A red bastion for a record-breaking 33 years, since the Left Front came to power in 1977, change is definitely in the air. Between the last Assembly elections in 2006, where the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)]-led Left Front won 234 out of 294 seats, and now much water has flowed. The decline of the Left Front's popularity was most starkly illustrated in the 2009 general elections when it won 15 out of 42 seats, its worst showing since 1977. The fall in the Left's fortunes has been accompanied by a corresponding rise in support for the Trinamul Congress, led by the Union Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee. The Trinamul, which managed only 30 seats in the 2006 Assembly elections, did exceedingly well in the Lok Sabha elections winning 19 seats. Its ally, the Congress, won six seats. One reason for the Left's drubbing in the general elections was a united opposition with the Trinamul-Congress alliance winning nearly 45 per cent of votes to the Left's 43 per cent. In earlier elections the division of opposition votes had handed an easy victory to the Left. But more important, there was widespread disaffection with the Left and Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee over various issues, most notably land acquisition for industrial development. The conflict between farmers and the government was used by the Trinamul to boost its support in parts of rural Bengal. Even though it had the effect of driving out the much-hyped Tata Nano

project from Bengal and scaring away other potential investors, the Trinamul benefited in the elections. Subsequent local-level elections have only confirmed the growing popularity of Trinamul and the disarray in the Left.

For the 2011 Assembly elections much is going to depend on whether the Trinamul can firm up an alliance, like the last Lok Sabha elections, with the Congress. That would probably spell doom for the Left. There are however several imponderables, the chief being Banerjee's flirtation with the Maoists – who are active in parts of Bengal and have indulged in violence – which have made the Congress high command very uncomfortable. The latest instance was a rally held by the Trinamul in troubled Lalgarh in early August, which was backed by Maoist groups. Besides, there are elements with the Congress who believe that the Left, despite its intransigence over the Indo-US nuclear deal in 2008, might be a more stable ally than the mercurial Mamata Banerjee.

Tamil Nadu

Elections in Tamil Nadu tend to be cyclical with the ruling combine usually being thrown out at poll time. And more than in some other states the role of alliances is of paramount importance. Will the 2011 Assembly elections break this trend? It is too early to hazard any predictions, but it is significant that the DMK-Congress winning combine in the 2006 Assembly elections bucked anti-incumbency in the 2009 general elections. The DMK-Congress alliance won 133 seats in the 243-seat Assembly in 2006. In last year's Lok Sabha polls, the alliance, along with Vidudhalai Chiruthaigal Katchi, a party representing the Dalits, repeated their performance winning a combined 27 seats to the rival All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's (AIADMK) tally of 12. Though Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi's popularity ratings were not appreciably higher than his main rival AIADMK's Jayalalithaa, a few reasons accounted for the DMK combine's successful run. One, it managed to get the backing of Scheduled Castes. Two, voters rated the government highly on governance, with 68 per cent, according to the NES, expressing satisfaction. Three, freebies such as distribution of television sets and a reasonably well-run Public Distribution System for food and other essentials won over poor voters.

The fate of the DMK government in next year's elections in Tamil Nadu will depend on whether

voters still rate it highly on governance. Another factor will be the relative strength of the smaller parties such as Pattali Makal Katchi (PMK), the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (MDMK) and Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK), formed by actor Vijayakanth, which made its debut in 2006 but won an impressive 10 per cent of the votes in the 2009 general elections. There is one issue that could queer the pitch for the DMK – a dynastic struggle. With DMK patriarch Karunanidhi in his mid-eighties, in a party that is dominated by dynasty, the question of his successor will assume prime importance. Whether Karunanidhi will be up for another five-year term is debatable. If not, there is every chance of a power struggle between Karunanidhi's two sons, M.K. Azhangiri and M.K. Stalin, which could work to their opponents' advantage.

Kerala

If West Bengal has been a red fortress for over three decades, in Kerala the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front (LDF) has usually alternated in power with the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF). There is a possibility that this alternation might be repeated once again. The 2009 general elections was a clear indication that things were going badly for the ruling LDF. The primary reason for voters shunning the LDF was the widespread charges of corruption and kickbacks against top CPI(M) leaders, most notably general secretary Pinarayi Vijayan. This was compounded by factionalism within the party with Chief Minister V.S. Achutanandan being sidelined by the party. Another factor that went against the LDF was its ill-conceived alliance with Abdul Nasser Madani's People's Democratic Party in a bid to woo Muslim voters, a ploy which failed spectacularly.

There is good reason to think that the LDF has not done enough to reverse its unpopularity. Part of the problem is the drift within the Left and its main constituent, the CPI(M). Ever since the Left parties decided to pull out of the UPA government in 2008 on the Indo-US nuclear, it has apparently been unable to get its act together. CPI(M) General Secretary Prakash Karat, who was behind the decision to pull out, is seen by many as inflexible and not well suited for the hurly burly of coalition politics. Besides there is real resentment among local party leaders to the way the central party leadership is shoving down decisions, which do not go down with the electorate, on them. This has ensured that the Left, particularly the CPI(M), is a divided house both in Kerala and West Bengal.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, the elections in the four states might not have a direct impact on the stability of the UPA government. But it could well have an impact on the ever-shifting equations of Indian politics. If the Trinamul



Nitish Kumar waving to supporters

and the DMK do well in their respective states it could well increase their clout in the central government as well as impact policies. Correspondingly if the Congress fails to regain some ground in states like Bihar its position would be weakened. The elections will also be a test of Rahul Gandhi's pan-Indian appeal. In the opinion poll conducted by *India Today*, Rahul Gandhi had the highest approval of 29 per cent for the prime minister's job. There are many who credit the Congress' good

showing in Uttar Pradesh in the 2009 general elections, after years of stagnation, to Rahul's campaigning. The coming elections will show how much he can enthruse voters elsewhere. It will also be a test of how much his much-publicised goal of re-introducing inner-party democracy within the Congress is working. Finally, the elections, particularly in West Bengal, will be a real examination of the Left and its future.

As for longer-run trends, the series of elections will test the hypothesis if anti-incumbency, which has been a recurrent feature of recent Indian politics, is on the decline. This comes with the concomitant theory that if a state government delivers on governance – what is referred to as *bijli, sadak, pani* in shorthand – it is likely to be re-elected. If that is true, we could be seeing less of caste and ethnic politics in elections. That would indeed be a hopeful sign for the future. ■

Seminar on 'South Asian Regionalism: Prospects and Challenges'

ISAS organised a seminar on 'South Asian Regionalism: Prospects and Challenges' on 13 August 2010. Dr Sheel Kant Sharma, the Secretary-General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), was the invited speaker at the event. The session was chaired by ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai.



(L-R) ISAS Chairman Ambassador Gopinath Pillai and Dr Sheel Kant Sharma

Reflecting upon South Asian regionalism in the past, Dr Sharma pointed out that despite a slow start with the setting up of SAARC in the 1980s, it registered modest gains within the first few years. He stated that following these small achievements, regional cooperation had to negotiate the roadblocks arising out of terrorism and its impact on bilateral relations. Despite the phase of economic liberalisation and deregulation in the region, policy framework hindered progress. However, globalisation provided much needed benefits to South Asian economies in terms of trade, investment and remittances flow.

Dr Sharma added that in the coming few years, SAARC would have a three-fold focus on trade facilitation, connectivity and infrastructure and finally energy availability. He added that there was a pressing need to address these challenges in the regional context to not only boost growth and productivity, but also to facilitate the regional integration process.

Alluding to SAARC's annual summit at Thimpu this year, which also marks the silver jubilee year of the organisation, he highlighted its achievements, which includes the SAARC Food Bank, SAARC Development Fund, implementation of SAARC Free Trade Agreement and the newly established South Asian University (SAU). SAU, according to Dr Sharma, is aimed at becoming a centre of excellence to bring together the future leaders of the region.

Dr Sharma also called for a SAARC forum for ideation wherein governments along with think-tanks, non-governmental organisations and academia at large can brainstorm and thresh out a 25-year vision for SAARC's future. He said that the governments alone cannot pave a vision for SAARC and such an exchange of ideas was needed for ensuring their way into policymaking.

Reiterating the fact that political issues were not SAARC's agenda, Dr Sharma expressed hope for increased cooperation in development, trade and poverty alleviation, which would bind the region.

Afghanistan's Rendezvous with Democracy: Parliamentary Elections

Shanthie Mariet D'Souza
Visiting Research Fellow

The year 2010 has been a crucial year for Afghanistan, with the holding of the London Conference in January, the consultative peace *jirga* in June and the Kabul Conference in July. In the most significant event of the year, on 18 September 2010, the war-torn country went ahead with another election to elect members to the *Wolesi Jirga*, the lower house of the national parliament. About 4.3 million ballots were cast in the election amounting to about one-fourth of the country's 17 million registered voters. There were more than 2,500 candidates, including nearly 400 women, contesting for 249 parliamentary seats.

Like the previous ones, this election too was seen as yet another opportunity for the Afghans to build democratic political order in their country, which would provide credibility to the government in Kabul. For the western nations, on the other hand, elections provided a window of opportunity to depict progress, which, in turn would help in reassessing their commitment to the Afghan war. It was another such event that was required to be ticked off in the checklist of progress for the domestic constituency and assuage the concerns that the war was heading in the right direction. Despite the forewarnings and scepticism of holding elections at a time of rising violence and instability, Afghanistan went ahead with the polling process.

One of the visible signs of this election was an increase in the number of women seeking representation in parliament. In a country where threat from the Taliban and other conservative groups to female politicians, educators and students is routine, the number of women candidates increased from 328 in the 2005 parliamentary elections across Afghanistan to 406 in the recently concluded election. As many as 68 women had been elected as Members of Parliament (MPs) in 2005. In the *Wolesi Jirga*, 64 seats are reserved by law for women. Issue of women rights and more so political rights, remains a matter of contention in Afghanistan. Senior members of *Hizb-e-Islami*, a party with its linkages with Taliban insurgency, link the reservation of seats for women with foreigners imposing a practice alien to Afghan culture. Ahead of the August 2009 presidential elections, President Hamid Karzai, under pressure from the radicals, had approved the Shi'ite Personal Status Law severely limiting the rights of the Shi'ite women. A revision afterwards has not brought about significant changes in Shi'ite women's status in the country. A lot of women, unable to contest from their home provinces contested from relatively safer Kabul.

The first election to the *Wolesi Jirga* had taken place in 2005. The functioning of the parliament in the last four years demonstrates that the role of the parliament as a decision-making body is still in evolution. It was a body, in its first edition, that engaged in wide ranging discussions. Consisting of members representing a variety of interests, backgrounds (including warlords) and ideological values, the members lacked personal capacity or intent to fulfil expectations of their constituencies. Moreover, systemic challenges ensured that the parliament failed to practically implement laws that were passed in the house.

Possibilities of widespread fraud in the voting process, similar to the experiences of the presidential elections in 2009, were evident days before 18 September. The country's Independent Election Commission (IEC) had confirmed that out of a planned 6,835 polling stations, only 5,897 would be open. The rest 938, amounting to 14 per cent of the total number of booths, in 25 provinces would be too unsafe to open, thus depriving a significant Afghan population of the right to participate in the process and also challenging the legitimacy of the new parliament that would eventually be in place. The IEC spokesman in Kabul, Noor Mohammad Noor, said these 938 polling booths would not be open for polling 'as security



Election campaign posters in Kabul

cannot be guaranteed'. In fact that count could have gone up to 1,038, if not for a last-minute revision of the lists by President Karzai and General David Petraeus, the commander of the coalition forces, who certified 100 polling stations to be 'safe'.

Campaigning by candidates in southern and eastern Afghanistan, of which many remain Taliban strongholds in spite of the recent operations by the US and the NATO forces, did not take place. Among the candidates, use of posters, television channels and the radio and private canvassing remained the primary way of seeking popular support. Odd candidates and former MPs did limited open campaigning only with the assistance of their own militia groups as well as private security guards. These are areas predominantly inhabited by the Pushtuns with whom the Taliban share an ethnic affiliation and thus have been able to derive much of its support and strength.

Even provinces like Kunduz and Baghlan, in Northern Afghanistan, which were considered relatively safe and stable, remained far too



Ballot papers being counted in Herat, western Afghanistan

dangerous for electoral campaigning. It was not surprising that according to the IEC estimates in Kunduz, the number of polling stations which were abandoned was higher than elsewhere in the country. Of the 217 planned stations, almost 45, amounting to 21 per cent, did not open. Taliban encroachments were also reported from provinces like Balkh, Faryab and Jawzjan.

The Taliban had made concerted efforts to disrupt the 2005 parliamentary elections and the 2009 presidential elections. Hundreds of civilians en route to the polling stations were attacked and killed in 2009. This time around, Taliban killed at least two candidates and issued death threats to many others. On 23 July 2010, the Taliban carried out a bomb blast targeting a candidate Sayedullah Sayed in a mosque shortly before Friday prayers at Ismail Khel in Khost province, which shares borders with Pakistan. Sayed, who headed a small political party and was preaching in the mosque, lost both his legs in the explosion and eventually died. In the last week of July, Taliban abducted another candidate, Najib Gulstani in the Qarabagh district of Ghazni province. His dead body was recovered on 6 August 2010 from the side of the road that runs between Qarabagh and Ab Band districts. Taliban had demanded the release of two of their detained soldiers in exchange for the candidate.

The Taliban-led insurgents intimidated the common people, distributing *Shabnamah* (letters distributed/delivered during the night hours and known as night letters) warning voters, candidates and election workers to abstain from the elections or face violent targeting. Reports indicate that in one district of Nangarhar province, adjoining Kabul, Taliban fighters threatened that 'anyone caught with a voter registration card would have her or his right hand cut off'. Female candidates were specifically targeted with threatening phone calls. On 26 August, at least 10 people working for a female candidate Fawzia Gilani in the western province of Herat were kidnapped and killed.

On the day of the election, Taliban launched dozens of rocket attacks confirming the security fears. With 32 civilian deaths and 95 injuries, these attacks damped popular enthusiasm. Participation in the election appeared to be lower than the 2009 presidential poll. Preliminary estimates put turnout at about four million, compared to the six million votes cast in the presidential election.

In 2009, President Karzai had insisted on opening as many polling booths as possible across the country. However, lack of security and absence of monitoring mechanism turned this exercise into establishing what has come to be described as 'ghost' polling stations, which generated ballot boxes stuffed with voting papers fraudulently filled in. Critics allege that this had in fact assisted Karzai to secure a win over his rival Dr Abdullah Abdullah. The five-member Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC), which was dominated by a majority of three non-Afghans, had estimated that one in three votes cast in favour of Karzai was fraudulent. Subsequently, the ECC was reconstituted by Karzai, ensuring an Afghan majority in the body.

The fraud-marred August 2009 presidential elections had thrown the Obama Administration's Af-Pak strategy of transferring authority to a legitimate Afghan government, which, in turn, would pave the way for eventual US 'exit' from Afghanistan, into a quandary. To that extent, it was necessary that the parliamentary election be fair and neutral in electing a candidate deemed 'acceptable' to most Afghans.

Apprehensions of fraud expressed before the 18 September 2010 election have been confirmed. Reports indicate that fraud in this election was so widespread that it could affect the results in a third of provinces. There has been reports of ballot stuffing; the strong-arming of election officials by candidates' agents; and even the handcuffing and detention of election workers. However, this

time around, fraud appeared to have been committed both by the supporters as well as opponents of President Hamid Karzai. While in the important southern province of Kandahar, candidates accused President Karzai's influential half-brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, of drawing up a list of winners even before the election, in several other provinces local power brokers have managed to stuff fraudulent votes in favour of their preferred candidates. Media reports indicated that local strongmen with armed backers coerced and threatened voters and in some cases the local government employees too participated in ballot stuffing.

The ECC has reportedly received 3,000 complaints since election, mostly from 13 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. Out of these roughly 58 per cent have been categorised as serious enough to affect the outcome of the balloting. Complaints in four provinces — Kandahar, Nuristan, Zabul and Paktika — have yet to be categorised, but fraud is expected to be extensive. Importantly, while fears had been expressed of such fraud taking place in the unstable Pashtun belt, in the south of the country, an important base for both the Taliban insurgents and President Karzai, complaints have been lodged in the northern and western provinces as well, indicating a wide sweep of electoral malpractices.

Even though the American and other international diplomats steered clear of criticising the election process (unlike the presidential elections of August 2009) by calling it an 'Afghan led process', there is serious danger of electoral malpractices resulting in a less than credible parliamentary election. This could further compound the international forces capacity in transferring authority to a legitimate Afghan government. Such reports of fraud have brought to light a rift between voters and the political elite who would ensure the continuance of a culture of impunity, patronage and cronyism. This could further fuel resentment and alienation among the disenfranchised.

A final election result was not expected until late October. There are optimists including the United Nations who indicate that the election, in a conflict ridden Afghanistan, is a positive sign. They see the process as a progress in Afghanistan's endeavour to take charge of its own future. However, the fact remains that progress achieved through elections to the parliament or to the office of the president in Afghanistan, has been minimal in terms of long-term institution building. Neither do such processes in an ongoing conflict theatre help in building a politically incisive order. The demands of the time, in the face of the pace with the US and other nations are losing patience in that country, are much more demanding. What Afghanistan really needs is the emergence of a political system capable of forging the national consensus needed to end the conflict. ■

Sri Lanka: Problems and Prospects of Peace & Post-War Policy

Dayan Jayatilleka
Visiting Senior Research Fellow



Over a year after the war and more than six months after the re-election of President Mahinda Rajapakse and his coalition, the most sensational development in Sri Lanka is the 'whistle blowing' by K. Pathmanathan alias K.P., the former procurement chief of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who is now in the comfortable custody of the Colombo authorities. However, the most significant developments with strategic and security dimensions are the opening of the Hambantota port (in the island's deep South) built with a generous loan from China and the emerging dynamics of post war policy, especially in the former high conflict areas of the North and East of the island.

History tells us that ports are not only a driver of rapid development but a multiplier of modernisation and the country's Deep South, which after centuries of neglect has generated and benefited from a provincial power shift, will never be marginalised again. The quiet pride, hope and gratitude that most Sri Lankan citizens feel with regard to the Hambantota port and our long standing friend China must be set alongside another lesson about our other friends that we could learn from a recent development, which has not drawn anything like the attention it merits.

Meanwhile, if anyone should be called upon to testify before the 'Lessons Learnt' panel (the domestic mechanism for retrospection and reconciliation initiated by the Government of Sri Lanka), it is surely K.P., who in an interview given to the respectable Canada-based Tamil journalist and blogger D.B.S. Jeyaraj, makes disclosures – or allegations – which are truly shocking. In the interview, K.P. was quoted saying that several western states stood ready to evacuate the top leadership of the LTTE,

including Velupillai Prabhakaran, to safety in a third country. This is what was said on record:

'I was in touch with international political leaders, top bureaucrats, diplomats, opinion-makers of different countries and also high-ranking United Nations (UN) officials. I contacted some of them directly. Influential people contacted some others on my behalf. In March 2009, I thought I had made a breakthrough, but sadly Prabhakaran rejected the proposal.'

I had a tentative plan with international endorsement. The LTTE was to lay down arms by hoarding them in specific locations. The words used were "lock-off". That is, arms particularly heavy weapons were to be locked off in specific places. They were to be handed over to representatives of the UN. Afterwards there was to be a cessation of hostilities in which the people were to be kept in specific "no firing zones". Negotiations were to be conducted between the government and LTTE with Norwegian facilitation.

Tentatively about 25 to 50 top leaders with their families were to be transported to a foreign country, if necessary. The middle level leaders and cadres were to be detained, charged in courts and given relatively minor sentences. The low-level junior cadres were to be given a general amnesty. The scheme was endorsed by the West including Norway, European Union and the United States (US). The Americans were ready to send their naval fleet to do evacuation, if necessary.

I don't think there was any official intimation to Colombo, but maybe they were sounded out informally. But the plan was never concretised because the main man

concerned, Prabhakaran, rejected it. I had written an outline of the plan and sent it to him for approval. If he said "Proceed", I would have concretised it and started work on implementing it. But when I faxed the details in a 16-page memorandum, he rejected the 16 pages in just three words "Ithai Etrukkolla Mudiyaathu" - "This is unacceptable".' (K.P. Speaks Out-2, DBS Jeyaraj Column, Daily Mirror Saturday, 14 August 2010).

If his disclosures/allegations were true (and if they were not, I would have expected a contradiction) not only was K.P., at the time a representative of a proscribed and notorious terrorist organisation, in touch with highly placed sources in the UN system and the West, but Prabhakaran, the man who stood accused of responsibility for the murder of a former prime minister of India, a Sri Lankan president, Sri Lankan foreign minister and an opposition leader, was a candidate for evacuation by the US forces. From their safe exile, the top leadership of the LTTE would have rekindled the dreadful war that ate at the entrails of the Sri Lankan society. All Sri Lankans are surely digesting the implications as must all Asians. Prabhakaran inflicted more damage and harm on Sri Lanka than Osama Bin Laden did on the US. As General David Petraeus confirmed the other day, 'the capture or killing or Bin Laden' remains a central objective of the US strategy in the Afghanistan-Pakistan theatre.

No area of policy requires more careful thinking than that of the state in the former high conflict areas of the North and East. These policies have their effect along two axes. The first is the integration of the Tamil minority and the overall project of nation-building. Nowhere is this more fraught than in a region where the populace is predominantly of a different,



Victorious President Mahinda Rajapakse acknowledges supporters

aggrieved ethnicity and/or religion than those of the makers and implementers of policy. Alienation can lead to resentment and resentment to resistance. Even if resistance does not lead to revolt and rebellion by a future generation, a sullen alienation will hang like a dark cloud over the picture of post-war Sri Lanka that world opinion perceives.

Secondly, since our giant neighbour (India) contains 70 million Tamils who consider themselves as having a relationship with the Tamils of Northern Sri Lanka, our relationship with our Tamil citizens cannot but impact our relationship with our neighbour.

Like the vast majority of Sri Lankan citizens, I support the establishment of a sufficient and permanent Sri Lankan military presence on state land in the North and East. However, I am also concerned about reports of the establishment of permanent housing for military families and the acquisition of privately owned land for that purpose.

The reason for my support and opposition is security of the state and society. The state of Sri Lanka has every right to establish armed encampments and deploy its armed forces wherever it sees fit. I have no problem with the exercise of that right. Yet, just as every other right, it must be exercised prudently, because the unity of Sri Lanka as a single country is not the only aspect of reality that must be taken into account. Ours is also a multi-ethnic country with a historically evolved and stable ethno-demography. The Tamils consider the Northern Province as their ancestral land, the land of their grandfathers and great-grandfathers. I have met seventh generation Malaysian Tamils who are emotionally attached to Kokuvil as their native place, where their roots run back to.

The Sri Lankan state must internalise the military lessons of all the wars it has had to fight in the North and East and deploy troops in a manner that the area is strategically as impregnable as is possible to render it. The Sri Lankan military deployments in the North

and East must never be vulnerable again, militarily or logistically. They must be capable of safeguarding our outer borders as well as preventing/pre-empting terrorism and low intensity insurgency.

The Sri Lankan military configuration in the North and East must be capable of deterring or fighting and winning future wars. But it must not be the cause or catalyst for future conflict. That would be self-defeating because it would not enhance national security; it would undermine it.

Had Sri Lanka either been bereft of an internal ethno-national question (the Tamil question) or had the Sri Lankan military been multi-ethnic in composition, the acquisition of private land for high security zones and permanent housing for military families would not have been so serious a problem. We are dealing with the reality of a mono-ethnic, monolingual, mono-religious military establishing permanent housing for their families in a differently mono-ethnic area with a high degree of sub-nationalist consciousness.

There would be those who argue that a mono-ethnic army was able, against all expectation, to win a war against terrorism and separatism on the home turf of the insurgents. This is not strictly true. The achievement of the Sri Lankan armed forces was both greater than that and different from it. The Sri Lankan army defeated a rival secessionist army, a powerful militia, not a guerrilla insurgency or terrorist network. The Tigers had long outgrown those stages and hypertrophied to the socio-politically unsustainable level of a parallel armed force, fighting a quasi-conventional war.

Today, the state must deploy the armed forces in the North and East in a manner that deters and prevents future conflict, rather than sows the seeds for it, either in the forms of terrorism, guerrilla cells or unarmed civic resistance. The establishment of permanent military bases strictly within state 'Crown' land is doubtless imperative to guarantee the first objective, but the acquisition of private land

and the settlement of military families could trigger the latter. The permanent settlement of military families means places of religious worship, schools, shops, cinemas, services, etc, and the first sign of protest would also mean widening the zone, narrowing access to the civilians of the area, perhaps new access roads and the proliferation of checkpoints.

This may seem an excellent method of population mixing, but that works as a method of conflict transformation only if population movement is a result of natural economic factors, not unilateral state policy.

The right kind of security policy for the North and East, a policy which derives from the 'best practices' globally, a policy which is scientific and professional rather than driven by wrong interpretations of history and ethno-religious motivations, will enhance and ensure security. The wrong kind of security policy for the post-war North and East in which Sri Lankan armed forces cantonments become interlinked oases embedded in a hostile local population, may turn the entire area into a high insecurity zone.

Realism tells us that the North and East have to be secure over the long term. It tells us that the Sri Lankan security forces will remain overwhelmingly mono-ethnic at least in the short term. Realism, which is drawn in large part from world history, further tells us that in such a situation, a policy of permanent encampments and fortifications must be accompanied by alliances with the local elites and a degree of local autonomy. That autonomy must not be so large as to be dysfunctional to security and strategy but must be sufficiently broad to pre-empt local disaffection.

Sadly, it would seem as though policy projections do not involve this latter aspect of sufficient local autonomy, and that the security aspect is designed to overlook, override, bypass or undermine that local autonomy should it be implemented under external pressure or internal political compulsion. The increased alienation of the Tamil people of the North and a widening gulf between the collective psyches of our main communities cannot be a pathway to stable security and permanent peace. The so-called demographic solution is no solution, as has been proved even in its conceptual birthplace — and notwithstanding a superpower blank cheque that Sri Lanka will never have.

While 'facts are being created on the ground', if the elected representatives of the Tamil people remain divided, with some dreaming of self-determination and others of federalism, and still others refuse to talk to their erstwhile comrades who are in government, instead of collectively pressing for the reasonable demand of the reactivation of the existing constitutional provisions as reiterated in bilateral statements and international undertakings, then these Tamil representatives will have only themselves to blame for the continuing Tamil tragedy. ■

South Asia's Economic Outlook

M. Shahidul Islam
Research Associate



Most of South Asia, led by India, has returned to a high growth path following the recession of 2008-09. However, the spectre of inflation, particularly headline inflation, poses a significant threat to the region's short-term economic outlook. While the rich generally get the largest piece of the economic growth pie, the inflation affects the poor most adversely given that a large part of their income is allocated to food articles. For Pakistan, there is an additional problem caused by the devastating floods that ravaged the country following an abnormal monsoon. Bangladesh, which witnessed steady growth despite the global recession, looks likely to maintain its growth momentum in the current fiscal year, albeit with some downside risks. This article discusses the economic outlook of South Asia's five key economies, viz., India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

Global Environment

While most South Asian economies rely heavily on domestic demand for growth, the region is also integrating steadily with the rest of the world. Thus the external economic environment is no less important for the region. India's need for external finance to meet its savings-investment gap, the region's growing exports basket, South Asia's increasing

demand for energy and other commodities, and a number of countries' excessive reliance on remittances are a few instances that demonstrate how important a stable global economy is for growth and stability. Moreover, a large part of the region's more than US\$300 billion foreign exchange reserves are invested in US dollar- and Euro-denominated assets.

However, the external environment is not unique across the world. Asia in general has recovered from the crisis. But the pace of recovery on both shores of the Atlantic has been less than satisfactory. Some analysts even see a possible double-dip recession in the West. While South Asia's direction of trade varies widely, the Euro zone and the United States (US) remain their two important export markets. Austerity measures to check the growing fiscal imbalances and rein in burgeoning public debt in advanced countries could slow down South Asia's exports growth. However, a depreciated Euro will have the reverse effect.

Decline in domestic demand in the West, owing to low capacity utilisation and higher unemployment rates, means there would be less pressure on global energy and commodity prices. While this gives some space to South

Asia's households and the exchequer, supply-side shocks in the international commodity markets due to the ban on commodity exports by some countries could put some pressure on the regions' headline inflation. Nevertheless, the outlook for oil prices, another key component of headline inflation, looks less volatile despite strong demand from developing Asia. Oil prices in the international markets are projected to be at an average of US\$80 per barrel in 2010 and US\$85 in 2011 provided the US dollar does not witness a marked depreciation. There is a strong inverse correlation between oil and the US dollar.

For the remittance-dependant economies — Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Pakistan — the economic outlook of the Gulf region is crucial. China-led Asia's growth may not be a pure substitute for energy-exporting Middle Eastern economies, but it is a new 'silk route' for the petroleum exporters.

India

The latest economic survey projected an 8.75 per cent growth for the economy for fiscal year 2010-11 and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) expects the economy to grow at 8.4 per cent. As far as India's supply-side economy is concerned, its industrial production has

remained fairly robust. Barclays Capital projects that growth in capital and intermediate goods will remain buoyant and expects industrial activity related to consumer products to remain steady thanks to healthy job growth, positive wealth effects and normalisation in agricultural output. Based on available and projected monsoon data, it is expected that agriculture sector will perform better in 2010-11. The sector performed poorly last year but the RBI projects a 4.0 per cent growth in 2010-11. The services sector that contributes almost 60 per cent of India's total output has shown strong growth in recent quarters, particularly in sectors that are related to manufacturing segments (construction, trade, hotel, transports and communication). The RBI projects that the services sector again will lead the way by growing at 9.1 per cent in 2010-11.

On the demand side, private consumption followed by investment will remain major drivers of growth. Production of consumer durables and non-durables, auto sales and non-oil imports support this sentiment. This will put less pressure on public consumption that has shifted focus from fiscal expansion to fiscal consolidation by rationalisation of energy prices and divestment in state-owned enterprises. The recent 3-G auction for award of bandwidth in telecommunications has been a huge success that has given some fiscal space to the government. Growth in private sector credit and pick-up in corporate sales suggest a strengthening of domestic demand in 2010-11.

The major challenge for the economy is to rein in inflation. In recent months, food products have been contributing more to overall inflation than fuel, primary articles and manufacturing goods. Most projections expect inflationary pressures to ease later during the year with a near-normal monsoon to boost winter crops. Inflation is high despite the existing stock of food grain being much above the buffer norms. This indicates that it is not the stock of food grain but its poor distribution that is to be blamed for price volatilities.

The RBI has revised interest rates upward with the economy showing both high growth and inflation. Going forward, the challenge for both RBI and the fiscal authority is to maintain high growth with moderate inflation. While better winter crops and withdrawal of fiscal stimulus might slowly ease the pressure on prices, higher energy prices and manufacturing growth might force the RBI to take a neutral to tight monetary stance.

India is likely to achieve its targeted Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 2010-11 with some downside risks. The Asian Development Bank and the Economist Intelligence Unit, among others, project that India's GDP growth in this fiscal year will be at least eight per cent. However, in the next few months the control of inflation will remain a key challenge. Figure 1 captures the growth and inflation outlook for key South Asian economies in 2010-11.

Pakistan

Pakistan is now South Asia's 'sick man'. Its growth has been lower than even Nepal's in the past few years. A plethora of political and economic problems have battered the nation. It is now hit by one of the worst natural disasters in its recent history. Nearly 20 million people have been affected by the recent floods with most of them being subsistence farmers. The country's agriculture sector that constitutes 22 per cent of its national output is particularly badly hit. The spillover effect of floods could go beyond its boundaries. This could put some pressure on global commodity prices given that Pakistan is the third largest producer of wheat and the fourth largest grower of maize in Asia. The loss of the cotton crop might affect the country even more adversely given its linkages with the textile industry.

Pakistan's industrial production growth was negative in 2009 but it could return to positive growth owing to the low base effect and pick-up in industrial activities. The improved conditions in the global economy and the post-flood rehabilitation programmes that are likely to take off in the coming months can boost its industrial production.

Like most other parts of South Asia, Pakistan's major challenge is to control inflation. Agriculture crop losses and higher commodity prices in the global market might fuel already high food inflation in the coming months. However, if the country receives adequate food aid from international communities, food price inflation might not rise further.

However, Pakistan faces a number of structural problems in its economy. Energy scarcity in the country is affecting its growth. Its export sector faces severe competition from some Asian economies. Islamabad is increasingly becoming dependant on donor and external credit to finance its fiscal gap. The recent natural disaster and its consequences might postpone austerity measures to rein in fiscal imbalances imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but the country is likely to continue relying on donor agencies owing to persistent twin deficits (current account and fiscal deficits).

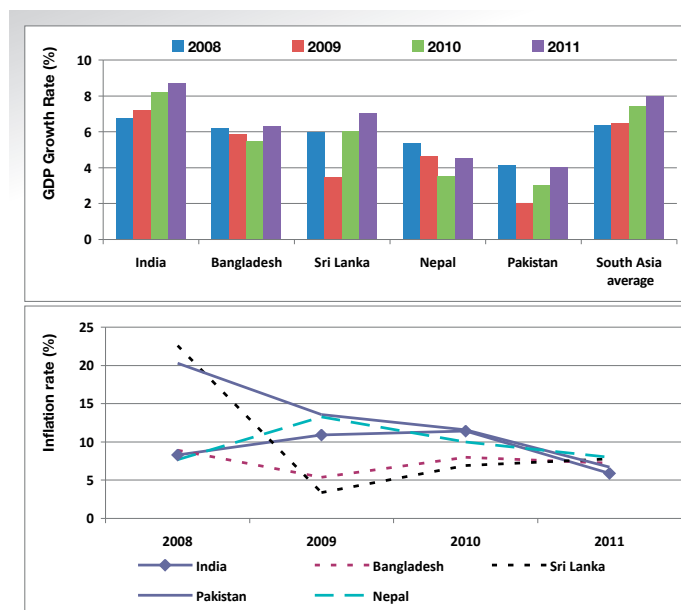
Pakistan's economic growth, which is already the lowest in South Asia, is likely to remain low in 2010-11 as well. Its medium-term outlook also does not seem promising owing to structural problems. However, in the next few quarters Pakistan's focus is not economic growth. Its challenges are to feed and provide shelter to millions of people affected by floods, rebuild the flood-ravaged infrastructure and provide credit and other support to farmers.

Bangladesh

Relatively low volatilities in growth and inflation separate Bangladesh from its neighbours. While most countries are growing from a low base—due to a growth slowdown during the financial crisis—Bangladesh is growing from a high base. Its growth averaged six per cent during the past five years; however, the lagged effect of the global crisis and energy shortage has decelerated its growth to some extent in the last fiscal year.

Bangladesh's national budget projected 6.7 per cent growth for the fiscal year 2011. However, realisation of this growth rate depends on a few factors. As far as the supply side is concerned, agriculture promises to maintain its growth momentum (around 4.0 to 4.5 per cent) thanks to favourable weather and farmers' improved access to inputs and credit. While agriculture's contribution to growth is much lower than the services and industrial sectors, it is critical for employment generation and price stability. The performance of the industrial sector, the second largest contributor to growth, may not be very robust owing to low utilisation of installed capacities and poor infrastructure. It remains to be seen how the government can expedite higher electricity and gas supplies that are critical for domestic industrial growth as well as export demand for apparels.

Figure 1: Past and Projected Trends in South Asia's Growth and Inflation



Source: Based on the Economist Intelligence

On the demand side, it is consumption that drives the country's growth, followed by gross fixed investment, though in recent years, investment growth has been sluggish. More worryingly, a large part of investment is fuelling the real estate boom and speculative investment in the equity market. Private consumption supported by robust remittances, among others, contributes the most to growth and this trend is likely to persist in 2011-12.

So far as inflation is concerned, it is food prices that matter most given the 65 per cent weight of food products in total inflation. The point-to-point food price inflation has grown double digit in recent months. Global commodity prices that threaten to spike again after 2007 are particular concerns for the country. The Bangladesh Bank revised its policy rates upward to contain inflation, and monetary policy is expected to be contractionary until price pressures are eased.

To sum up, Bangladesh faces some downside risks concerning its targeted GDP growth in the short run. Despite these, its growth is expected to be around six per cent. It can add at least one more percentage point to its overall growth if the energy concerns are addressed.

Sri Lanka

The economic considerations of Sri Lanka are considerably different from other South Asian economies. It accumulated a very high level of public debt, which soared during the period of prolonged ethnic conflict. However, it stands to benefit from the 'peace-dividend'. History

shows that countries grow fast following war and their high debt-to-GDP ratio can be reduced by increasing the denominator of the ratio. Moreover, it is in a position to divert some resources from its defence sector to more productive purposes such as infrastructure development, particularly in the northern part of the country.

The Sri Lankan economy is projected to grow at six per cent in 2010 and growth could be even higher in 2011. This is largely due to, as far as the demand side of the economy is concerned, an increase in private investment and consumption and increasing public investments in the north for infrastructure. The 2010-2012 development plan for the Northern Province targets to spend about US\$2.7 billion. The economy is expected to see a boom in its tourism sector in the coming years that can boost private consumption. Growth in inward remittances is also set to drive private consumption.

However, there are a few downside risks to Sri Lanka's growth. The existing uneasiness between the government and the IMF (that provided credit to the government) might halt the government's planned fiscal spending. The IMF wants the country's fiscal deficit to be reduced to a sustainable five per cent of GDP by 2011. Both the fiscal and current accounts are rather fragile. While recovery in export demand can drive overall growth, the European Union's (EU) withdrawal of access to the Generalised System of Preference and trade privileges from mid-2010 on account of weak implementation of human rights conventions can dampen the growth momentum. There

is also an inflation risk. While inflation in Sri Lanka declined following the financial crisis, the higher growth, particularly recovery in underutilised capacity (due to the war and recession) and higher commodity prices in the international markets, can push prices up.

Nepal

The Nepalese economy is likely to record lower growth in 2010 than in the previous year. This is largely due to a long political impasse in the country, slowdown in investment and projected poor agriculture and industrial growth. However, the major driver of growth, that is, the service sector, is likely to perform better owing to strong activity in tourism, telecommunications and social services.

On the demand side, while investment and exports are likely to experience low growth, consumption is likely to have a positive effect on growth, owing to remittances, among others.

For the central bank of Nepal, the key challenge is to maintain price stability due to the spike in food prices. Poor performance in agriculture in the coming months and higher commodity prices in the global market can push up inflation.

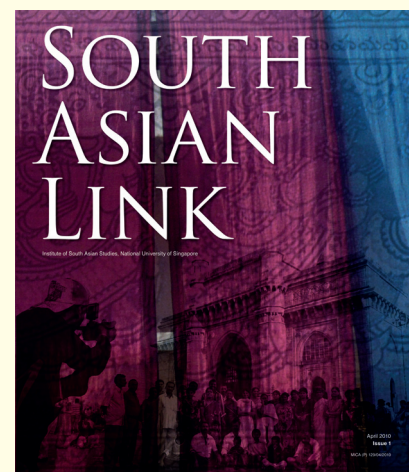
Then there are structural bottlenecks—power shortages and inadequate infrastructure—in the economy that unless addressed, could push the country into a long period of economic stagnation. The nation's economic outlook also depends on how politicians in the country build the 'New Nepal'. ■

ISAS connects South Asian Diaspora

The inaugural issue of ISAS *South Asian Link* newsletter has received compliments and positive feedback from around the globe. The *South Asian Link* provides a platform for the global South Asian diaspora to share their experiences and stories in an interesting, bite-sized format. The newsletter contributes to the appreciation and understanding of the diversified South Asian diaspora.

A copy of the first issue published in April 2010 was sent to Indian organisations, political leaders and embassies as well as South Asian diaspora around the world.

The newsletter is part of the institute's South Asian diaspora networking platform, *South Asian Link*, which was launched by President S R Nathan in November 2009. The networking platform aims to promote the South Asian culture and heritage, and help South Asians around the world to keep in touch with one another. You can download a copy of the *South Asia Link* newsletter from our website www.isas.edu.sg.



An Eye on South Asia

Suvi Dogra
Research Associate

Bhutan: SAARC and Regional Spirit

Bhutan hosted the 16th South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summit on 28 and 29 April 2010. This was the first time Bhutan hosted a SAARC summit. In line with the global cues, the summit, which also marked the silver jubilee of SAARC's formation, focused on climate change. The summit tried to promote greater regional integration to accelerate common goals like poverty reduction and sharing of water resources. Regional issues such as terrorism, the expansion of tourism across the region and the possible early implementation of the South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) were also discussed.

Bhutan also extended its model based on Gross National Happiness (GNH) as a possible development model for the region. Bhutan designed the GNH as an alternative metric for measuring the well being of a country as against traditional measure of GDP. While Bhutanese officials have discussed GNH at international events and conferences in the past, there have been no such events within the region. The summit also saw the inauguration of the permanent secretariat for the SAARC Development Fund, which will be based in Bhutanese capital, Thimphu. The fund will be used to underwrite development in social and other sectors in the member countries.

Meanwhile, Bhutan's transition from an absolute monarchy to that of a parliamentary democracy continues under King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck.

Maldives: Civil Unrest

The infant democracy of Maldives celebrated its 26th Independence Day amidst political unrest and severe economic challenges to its tourism-dependent economy. The two-year old multi-party democracy in the island nation is already facing a crisis of sorts, as a political deadlock between President Mohammad Nasheed and the opposition-controlled parliament, unfolds. Given the frequent blockages by the opposition, the entire cabinet resigned in late June even as President Nasheed and his vice-president stay put. Nasheed, who came to power in 2008 as the island nation's first democratically elected president, has blamed the opposition for blocking his efforts to govern and undermining the authority of the executive. The opposition has already passed an amendment which allows it to veto every lending or leasing agreement made between the government and an overseas party. The government's hopes to attract foreign investment to plug the fiscal deficit have also been dashed by the opposition.

In view of the constitutional restrictions and a difficult opposition, President Nasheed is believed to be considering a mid-term election if the opposition agrees to amend the constitution and re-elect parliament too. While mediation from the international community, mainly on the advice of United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, Robert Blake, has prompted a dialogue between the government and opposition, there needs to be concerted efforts to resolve the problem. Unfortunately, the transition to multi-party democracy that was underway in Maldives had now come to a standstill in the wake of the ongoing political crisis.

Nepal: In Limbo

The political limbo in Nepal continues despite international pressure and public disquiet as Nepal's political class failed to meet the 28 May 2010 deadline for crafting and promulgating a new constitution. The main political factions in the Constituent Assembly, however, agreed to extend the term of the transitional legislature by one year, thus avoiding the immediate prospect of either presidential rule or emergency rule.

Either of these alternatives would have pitted the main opposition party, the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), or UCPN (M), against President Ram Baran Yadav, and the army chief, General Chhatra Man Singh Gurung. This would have fuelled tensions between the Maoists and the political establishment. The Constituent Assembly now has until 28 May 2011 to complete the constitutional process and resolve other issues outstanding since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2006.

The Maoists agreed to the one-year extension of the transitional legislature's term on the condition that the prime minister, Madhav Kumar Nepal, who heads the 22-party governing coalition led by his Nepali Congress (NC) party, resign to allow for the formation of a new government. The Maoists had been calling for Mr Nepal's resignation since he took over the post of prime minister from the UCPN (M) leader, Prachanda, in May 2009, when the latter resigned over a dispute with the then army chief, Rookmangud Katawal. Mr Nepal finally resigned on 30 June 2009 but remained as caretaker prime minister until the legislature could elect a successor.

Mr Nepal's resignation ushered in a lengthy political vacuum as three ballots have failed to produce a winner. The business of government has more or less ground to a halt. In the most notable example, the constitutional and political uncertainties prevented the caretaker administration from presenting the budget for fiscal year 2010/11 (15 – 16 July 2010), and it was therefore forced to rely on an interim arrangement to enable government expenditure to continue for the first four months of the fiscal year, to mid-November 2010.

Sri Lanka: Constitutional Amendments

Mahinda Rajapakse may have been re-elected as president in January 2010, but the arrest of the defeated candidate, General Sarath Fonseka, who led the government's historic win over the Tamil Tigers last year, has given rise to prospects of rising authoritarianism and associated political instability in Sri Lanka's future. In early August 2010, the ruling United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) government was further strengthened by the defections of two members of parliament who were elected under the banner of the opposition United National Party earlier this year. These changes allowed UPFA towards its goal of achieving two-thirds majority that will now allow President Rajapakse of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP, the largest component of the UPFA), along with UPFA, to amend the country's constitution.

The 18th constitutional amendment has paved way for Rajapakse to seek a third term. The amendment contains clauses that will require the president to attend and report to parliament once every three months. On the other hand, the amendment also allows the president enhanced powers to appoint officials in various critical branches of government, including the judiciary and the election commission. This move was achieved by abolishing the constitutional council – responsible for making important appointments – created under the purview of the 17th constitutional amendment. The constitutional council will be replaced by a five-member parliamentary council consisting of the parliamentary speaker, the prime minister, the opposition leader and one other person from each of the ruling and opposition camps. This new commission will only be entitled to offer observations on the president's candidates for appointment to the relevant public service posts. Previously, the president was in theory only able to make appointments from among candidates put forward by the constitutional council.

The amendment has not found favour with the opposition which argues that a further decline of checks on presidential power is hardly a positive development for Sri Lankan democracy. The reforms clearly undermine the spirit of the 17th amendment, which had sought to make the bureaucracy and judiciary more independent of politics.

On the economic front, Sri Lanka's government unveiled its first budget since being re-elected earlier this year, aimed at reining in the budget deficit. The government has pledged to cut the deficit to eight per cent of gross domestic product this year, from 9.9 percent in 2009. As signs of economic recovery surface in the country, the International Monetary Fund has indicated that it will release the next tranche of the US\$2.6 billion loan to Sri Lanka, approved last year to help Sri Lanka weather the global economic crisis and support post-war reconstruction following the end of the civil war in May 2009.

Sixth Annual International Conference on South Asia

ISAS held its sixth annual international conference on South Asia on 11 and 12 November 2010 at the Mandarin Orchard Singapore. The theme of the conference was 'South Asia in the New Decade: Challenges and Prospects'. Delivering the keynote address, the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Defence Minister of Singapore, Mr Teo Chee Hean outlined various challenges facing the region, such as accelerating economic development, terrorism, ethnic conflicts and security issues. He emphasised the importance of the region acting in a collective manner for addressing the challenges and improving its economic and political prospects.

The conference gathered distinguished scholars and public policy experts from the United States, Europe, Australia, China, India and other parts of South Asia to speak on different aspects of security, political, governance and economic challenges facing South Asia. The event attracted about 200 participants from the academia, government, business and industrial communities. The discussions pointed out that the region had to carefully examine possible alternatives for meaningful regional cooperation and address the critical gaps in improving the quality of governance. While relationships with neighbours, like China, will influence future prospects, the latter will also be determined by the roles played by private initiative, entrepreneurship and media.



(L-R) DPM Teo and Ambassador Gopinath Pillai



Mr Bindra delivering the inaugural ISAS-SCB lecture

Some of the eminent speakers at the event included Mr Rory Medcalf, Programme Director, International Security, Lowy Institute for International Policy; Professor Wang Dehua, Director of Institute for South and Central Asia Studies, Shanghai Municipal Center for International Studies, China; Associate Professor Peter Mayer, Politics Department and Visiting Research Fellow of University of Adelaide, Australia; Dr Sadiq Ahmed, Vice Chairman, Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh; Mr Dipak Dasgupta, Principal Economic Adviser, Ministry of Finance, Government of India and Former Lead Economist of World Bank; and Dr Razeen Sally, Director of European Centre for International Political Economy, Belgium.

The conference also witnessed the launch of the inaugural lecture under the ISAS-SCB Speaker Series. The series, a collaborative venture between ISAS and Standard Chartered Bank (SCB), plans to bring distinguished speakers from South Asia to Singapore. The inaugural lecture was delivered by Mr Jaspal Singh Bindra, Group Executive Director and CEO Asia, Standard Chartered PLC. Mr Bindra spoke on the economic challenges for South Asia.

Intense Intellectual Learning

Oliver Loke
Intern 2010



Oliver at the majestic Taj Mahal during his research field trip to India

My journey at ISAS was in many ways a time of intense intellectual learning and personal development. The array of seminars offered me a memorable exposure to developments in South Asia, as well as the opportunity to appreciate the subtler aspects of the region, especially pertaining to my research on India's urbanisation futures. I am truly indebted to the advice and mentorship of Dr Amitendu Palit and the stellar team of in-house and visiting researchers as well as the administrative staff in delivering a memorable 12 weeks of discovery.

The initial impression of my trip to India was that of the rich and proud social diversity the subcontinent offered. During my trip, I was captivated by the strong co-existence of numerous faiths, cultures and people within the same region, be it in Chennai or Delhi. I recall my visit to the Christian monument of St. Thomas Mount as well as the lovely complexes of the Taj Mahal, while trying to comprehend some of the local delicacies such as the delectable Madras coffee. This research trip offered me an unparalleled avenue for a journey of academic discovery and learning that stretched my senses and mind to think beyond the safe confines of Singapore.

The second impression is the great human potential that has yet to be unlocked in numerous parts of South Asia, especially among the middle and low echelons of society. The vibrancy of the informal economies and youths stood in the shadows of the soaring new buildings and parks that line the zones of economic development. This has been both evident in the cities that I toured, which revealed the inner drive and aspirations of the new Indian youth and during my research walks within the cities of Faridabad and Agra, where I met an amazing array of young individuals who exhibited the capacity to learn and play a part in the Indian economic miracle.

The third lasting impression of my time at ISAS, was the rich learning and history that I learnt through the life experiences of my mentors as well as fellow researchers. I am blessed to have been part of this learning and sharing community that draws its pool of insights from a platitude of learning avenues, while being unabashed of sharing their views, even though contrary opinions may surface. I always recall the active and at times, vociferous discussions that were sparked by hot button issues ranging from security to commerce. It was a pleasure to soak in and admire the breadth and depth of this amazing faculty, as well as to slowly discover the ethos behind their lives.

Next, is the greater appreciation of systems. Coming from a hyper-efficient citystate of Singapore, my initial experience in the cities of Madras and Delhi offered a totally different viewpoint on the way people, societies, systems and processes evolve to meet present and future needs. While often chaotic on the surface, I greatly appreciated the interviews and people I met along the way, who shared their own take on the vibrancy of the Indian democratic traditions and processes. It was a surprising read of the Indian situation, especially on the backdrop of abject poverty and widespread illiteracy, malnutrition, poor sanitation and inadequate affordable housing for the masses. It too, stood in sharp contrast with the oft-praised East Asian economic and social development models. The Indian experience over the last two decades offers a compelling and contrarian view on how development ought to be, while exposing new shades of the way in which quality of life can be perceived and felt alternatively.

Finally, is my hope for the future. ISAS has provided me with a great foundation of South Asia which I am truly indebted to and grateful for. **My learning insights from India have served as a key signpost for my future learning and growth with the people and culture of South Asia.** While the economic efflorescence of this subcontinent has and will remain the catalyst for greater things to come; the real miracle lies in its people and the faces behind the headlines.

South Asia is a place of immense dreams and possibilities and I look forward to knowing and appreciating it greater along my walk of life.

Personal & Professional Development

Esther Nai
Intern 2010

The three-month internship programme at the ISAS had been the most fulfilling and meaningful experience. I benefited tremendously from it, both on a personal and professional level. I carried out my research field trip in Dhaka, Bangladesh which was the highlight of my internship. As my research focus was on microcredit, Bangladesh was naturally the best place to study. The lessons learnt, the friends I have made and the realities of the world have been some of the greatest takeaways from this trip.

While in Dhaka, I had the privilege of meeting with various microfinance institutions (MFIs) and small-scale non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that manage both microcredit programmes and education services for the poor. In total, I visited nine villages outside of Dhaka, and observed the non-formal education programmes at schools that have been set up to provide basic literacy skills to children. It was certainly heartening to see that the teachers were all females, who have in some cases taken time out voluntarily to educate the next generation. This sense of leadership and community involvement is an optimistic illustration of the changing role of women in this society. As the trip went on, it became evident to me that the traditionally conservative society in Bangladesh is gradually going through a positive social evolution. There are more daughters being sent to school these days, as family incomes are slowly being raised through microcredit programmes. As women become the main breadwinners of the household, they now have the power and capacity to ensure that their children, regardless of gender, are sent to school to give them a better future that they never had.

After conducting interviews with the microcredit borrowers, it was encouraging to see that women are now given the opportunity to equip themselves with useful financial literacy skills and business knowledge. With the loans provided by microcredit, women can now use the capital to invest and start a business. These loans usually go into rearing poultry, agricultural farming activities and small-scale enterprises such as setting up village shops. They have journeyed a long way from the discrimination and inequality they faced in the 1980s. Before microcredit was introduced, women were generally relegated to the social confines of their households. This restriction on their mobility and resulting invisibility from society also denied them control over any form of financial activity. Their

subordinate positions were further exacerbated by their destitute backgrounds, where bank loans were refused to them, due to their lack of physical collateral. Poverty has always been a painful and brutal reality in Bangladesh and life's fortunes were certainly made worse if one were a woman struggling to make ends meet.

The field trip has provided me with deep insights into the relationship between education and microcredit, as I tried to put my finger on the nexus between these two powerful developmental tools. Microcredit has certainly made social improvements a possibility and reality for many in Bangladesh, and the field trip has painted a more vivid picture of what actually happens on the ground and what more can be done about the situation. At the same time, it had also made me realise with a deeper conviction, that to sustain female empowerment and continue successfully with the goal of poverty alleviation in the years to come, microcredit and education should be more intertwined in its process and outcome.

As Mr Tarikul Islam from the Centre for Development Innovation and Practices (CDIP) said, 'Only money alone will not solve the complex poverty problem'. In many ways, microcredit is not a panacea for the empowerment conundrum. In order to make microcredit a more sustainable and effective empowerment tool, education has to be given more focus as a supplementary tool. Empowerment requires a shift in mindsets and ideas. This task can only be accomplished through the provision of knowledge and skills. More importantly for empowerment, confidence, self-esteem and the ability to choose should be seen as the eventual goal for women in Bangladesh. Madam Moriam, a loyal borrower of the Grameen Bank for over two decades now, stated with confidence that, 'Now, I am able to choose the design of my house and today, all family expenditure depends on me.' This self-confidence and freedom of choice are characteristics that were never possible or thinkable, in the past.



Madam Moriam (left) is the center chief in a village outside Dhaka. These women are microcredit borrowers who have been with Grameen Bank for at least 25 years

In retrospect, I was able to gain an important sense of purpose and reality in what I was studying, by speaking with microcredit borrowers, microcredit practitioners who have been in the field for over twenty years, and sitting in classes that had been made possible by microcredit programmes. Recounting the countless cups of tea I had with the villagers and my interviewees, I cherish the amazing hospitality and generosity of the Bangladeshis and their passion for helping their own country and people, with a constant smile on their faces while weathering the hardships they face. To me, these were truly poignant and inspiring moments.

I remember clearly the times where I got to experience the culture and history of this developing country and listened to the struggles and harsh realities that the people have to confront. This put my research into perspective for me, as I saw the ways microcredit was used in this particular context, how it came about and eventually worked for the people in this country. The socio-economic improvements witnessed in the lives of the women and children in Bangladesh serve as a testament to the success of microcredit.



Esther joining a class on the Education Support Programme in a school under CDIP

This internship has not only given me a wonderful opportunity to learn more about Bangladesh, it has also fuelled my passion and interest to know more about the Indian subcontinent. I truly appreciated all the closed-door sessions and seminars conducted by ISAS, as it provided perspectives on interesting political and social issues that we often do not get the chance to hear and talk about. Fortright discussions and opinions helped broaden my perspectives and enhance my knowledge of the region. It was definitely intellectually challenging and it has certainly piqued my interest on the various issues faced by the region. In summary, this internship has been an amazing experience, with many rich memories to keep and cherish.

The Emerging Dimensions of SAARC

Professor S.D. Muni launched ISAS book entitled '*The Emerging Dimensions of SAARC*' to a full-capacity audience in New Delhi on 23 July 2010.

The 322-page book attempts to look at the changing dynamics of South Asia and how the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has been adapting to becoming a strong instrument for regional cooperation and integration. The volume objectively looks into the promise of the emerging dimensions of SAARC in a new regional and global setting.

The Emerging Dimensions of SAARC is a compilation of essays contributed by eminent academics and analysts from SAARC countries, the United States and China.

Professor Muni, editor of the volume and visiting research professor at ISAS, drew hope from the trend towards democratisation in SAARC members.

Speaking at the launch, Professor Muni said, 'I feel if all countries are democracies, then the leaderships will have to deliver development. For that they will have to cooperate with each other. This will give a positive push to SAARC.'

India's National Security Advisor Shiv Shankar Menon graced the book launch. ISAS Chairman, Ambassador Gopinath Pillai delivered the opening address. The book launch, put together by ISAS and Cambridge University Press India, was held at the India International Centre.

The Emerging Dimensions of SAARC is published by Cambridge University Press India. To purchase a copy, please visit www.cambridgeindia.org.



(L-R) Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, Mr Shiv Shankar Menon, Mr H.K. Dua, Ambassador E. Gonsalves and Professor S.D. Muni

New ISAS Honorary (Senior) Fellows



Professor Ishtiaq Ahmed
Honorary Senior Fellow

Professor Ishtiaq Ahmed holds the position of Emeritus Professor at Stockholm University. He spent three years at ISAS as Visiting Senior Research Fellow from June 2007 to June 2008 and thereafter as Visiting Research Professor till June 2010. He also taught at the South Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore from January 2009 to June 2010.

Professor Ahmed migrated to Sweden in 1973, where he worked as a research assistant at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) during 1976-77 and 1982-83, working on a project entitled 'Arms Trade in the Third World'. He defended his doctoral dissertation, 'The Concept of an Islamic State: An Analysis of the Ideological Controversy in Pakistan' in 1985.

Professor Ahmed is a member of the editorial advisory boards of Asian Ethnicity, Journal of Punjab Studies; South Asian History and Culture; IPRI Journal, Islamabad; and PIPS Research Journal of Conflict and Peace Studies, Islamabad.

Professor Ahmed completed a major enquiry on the partition of the Punjab in 1947, entitled *The Punjab Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed: Unravelling the 1947 Tragedy Through Secret British Reports and First-Person Accounts* in June 2010. It is based on extensive interviews from both sides of the Punjab border. He is in the process of completing his new undertaking for ISAS – *Is Pakistan a Garrison State?*

Professor Ahmed writes a weekly column in the Pakistani English-language newspaper, *The Daily Times*.



Dr Nalin Mehta
Honorary Fellow

Dr Nalin Mehta is Joint Editor of the international journal *South Asian History and Culture* (Routledge) and also co-edits the Routledge book series by the same name.

An award-winning writer and social scientist, Dr Mehta has covered Indian politics for over a decade as a broadcast journalist and published widely on politics, media and sport history. His first book *India on Television: How Satellite Channels Have Changed the Way We Think and Act* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2008), was awarded the 2009 Asian Publishing Award for Best Book. Most recently, he has co-authored the best-selling *Sellotape Legacy: Delhi and the Commonwealth Games* (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2010).

His books also include a critical social history of Indian sport, *Olympics: The India Story*, with Boria Majumdar (New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2008), republished as *India and the Olympics* (London/NY: Routledge, 2009). Dr Mehta has edited *Television in India: Satellites, Politics and Cultural Change* (London: Routledge, 2008; Delhi: 2009), and co-edited *The Changing Face of Cricket: From Imperial to Global Game* (London: Routledge, 2010). He has just finished co-editing a volume on social and political change in the west Indian state of Gujarat in the fifty years since its creation as a separate state in 1960, *Gujarat Beyond Gandhi: Identity, Conflict and Society* (London/Delhi: Routledge: 2010, forthcoming).

Dr Mehta was recently honoured by the Australian government with an Alumni Excellence Award for Media and Entertainment and has held fellowships at La Trobe University, Melbourne; Australian National University, Canberra; and the International Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

Dr Mehta recently moved into international development with a stint at UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS, and is currently with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria in Geneva.

Formerly Deputy News Editor and anchor at *Times Now*, Dr Mehta has been consulting expert with *Headlines Today* (2008) and contributed columns to the *Indian Express*, *The Times of India* and several other publications. Since early-2010, he is a weekly syndicated columnist on politics and public culture for the Times of India Group's *Mumbai Mirror* and its sister publications (*Pune Mirror*, *Ahmedabad Mirror* and *Bangalore Mirror*).

A DFID-Commonwealth scholar, Dr Mehta was educated at La Trobe University, Melbourne (PhD, 2007); University of East Anglia, UK (MA International Relations, 1999); and University of Delhi (B.A. Honours Journalism, 1996).

New Researchers



Dr Ronojoy Sen
Visiting Research Fellow

Dr Ronojoy Sen has worked for over a decade in leading Indian newspapers. He was last with *The Times of India*, New Delhi, where he was a senior assistant editor on the editorial page. He was Visiting Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy, Washington, D.C. and the East-West Center Washington, and Fellow of the International Olympic Museum, Lausanne, Switzerland.

Dr Sen is the author of *Articles of Faith: Religion, Secularism, and the Indian Supreme Court* (Oxford University Press) published in 2010. He has contributed to edited volumes and has published in several leading journals, including *South Asia*, *Journal of Democracy*, *India Review* and *Sport and Society*. He writes regularly for *The Times of India*.

Dr Sen holds a PhD in Political Science from University of Chicago. He has a MA in International Studies from University of South Carolina and a BA in History from Presidency College, Calcutta, India.



Ms Suvi Dogra
Research Associate

Ms Suvi Dogra completed her Masters in International Political Economy from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), a graduate school of Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. At RSIS, she received the Student Research Study award and worked on the International Political Economy Research programme. In partial fulfillment of her degree, she wrote her thesis on India's increasingly comprehensive approach to economic engagement with East and Southeast Asia. She received her honours degree in Journalism from Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi. Her undergraduate dissertation dealing with the growing phenomenon of cyberfeminism and the role of the internet in the life of women in India was adjudged one of the best projects of her graduating cohort.

Prior to joining ISAS, Ms Dogra worked as a correspondent for the corporate bureau of Indian business daily *Business Standard*. She has worked briefly with the Human Rights Law Network and *Indian Express*. She has also briefly worked as a research assistant at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.



Ms Gayathri Lakshminarayan
Research Associate

Ms Gayathri Lakshminarayan has a Masters degree in International Relations from S. Rajaratnam School of International Relations, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. She also has a diploma in Peace and Conflict Resolution from Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

Ms Lakshminarayan has conducted field studies in Jammu and Kashmir, Nepal and Tamil Nadu. In the Indian governed state of Kashmir, she studied counter-insurgency programme devised by the Indian Army, involving surrendered militants. She completed a group project documenting pro-democracy voices in Nepal during the emergency declared by King Gyanendra in 2005. She has written a paper on mobilisation strategies used by Dravidian parties and their role in effecting social and political change in Tamil Nadu during the course of her Bachelor's degree in Communications, from Mount Carmel College, Bangalore University.

Ms Lakshminarayan has had a stint as a journalist with *Deccan Herald*, Bangalore covering issues pertaining to public policy and national security. She has also freelanced for *Force* magazine.



Ms Pratima Singh
Research Associate

Ms Pratima Singh graduated from Singapore Management University (SMU) in May 2010, with an honours degree in Economics. She graduated Magna Cum Laude and was awarded the Dean's List Certificate for academic excellence during the Academic Years 2007/2008 and 2009/2010. As part of her honours degree, she wrote a final year thesis titled 'Does the Middle Class Matter? A study on its role in economic development' and earned a distinction for the paper.

Ms Singh worked as a part-time research assistant in early 2010 for Centennial Group Asia, and wrote a report on regional cooperation in South Asia, which was later presented to the Asian Development Bank for their regional strategy development. In the summer of 2009, an internship with the Centre for Civil Society (New Delhi) provided her with the necessary exposure into the Planning & Policy departments of the Indian government, while she worked on a paper studying the characteristics, constraints and incentives of slum dwellers in Delhi. Published in the 'The Delhi Citizens' Handbook 2009', the paper provides recommendations to solve the problem of affordable housing in Delhi.

During her time at SMU, Ms Singh has been a research assistant for studies on development, underdevelopment and poverty as well as behavioural economics. She has also been a teaching assistant for courses such as macroeconomics, statistics and international economics.



Ms Hema Kiruppalini
Research Associate

Ms Hema Kiruppalini obtained her Masters in South Asian Studies in 2010 from National University of Singapore (NUS). Her thesis for the Masters degree was entitled 'Travelling Dwellers: Nepalese *Lahure* in Singapore'. As part of this pioneering research on the Nepalese community in Singapore, she conducted extensive fieldwork in both Singapore and Nepal over a period of two years, interviewing various individuals, including Gurkhas, businessmen, professionals and workers. Ms Hema also has a Bachelor in History from NUS.

In 2006, Ms Hema interned at the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS). As part of her internship, she conducted fieldwork to Nepal about the country's land reforms. She is knowledgeable in Nepali language. In 2007, she attended the summer school at the South Asian Institute at University of Heidelberg, Germany, where she undertook an intensive basic Nepali course.

In 2004, Ms Hema organised a three-week youth expedition to Kolkota, India, as member of the NUS History Society. She subsequently became the President of the Society from 2005-2006.

Ms Hema has a keen interest in history, culture and the arts.

New Administrative Staff



Ms Jacqueline Goh
Assistant Manager

Ms Jacqueline Goh is primarily responsible for planning, organising and marketing ISAS events and programmes. She also assists in corporate communications functions.

Jacqueline has close to 12 years of experience in marketing and communications. Her experience includes editorial and collateral production, managing advertising and promotions campaigns, media relations and events management.

Jacqueline holds a Master of Business (International Travel & Tourism Management) degree from University of Queensland, Graduate Diploma in Marketing Communications from Marketing Institute of Singapore and a Bachelor of Business (Marketing) degree from Monash University, Melbourne.

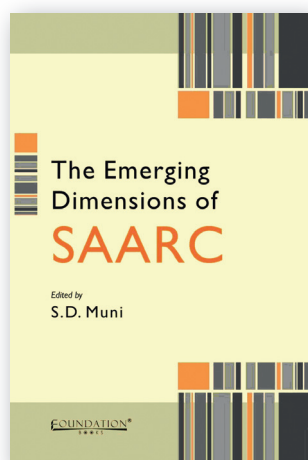


Ms Kamarunnisa Shaul Hameed
Programme Officer

Ms Kamarunnisa Shaul Hameed handles secretarial and administrative responsibilities. She also assists in events management.

Kama's working experience of 16 years includes having worked as a project secretary cum administrator in a marine company, settlement officer at an asset management company and personal assistant to general manager in the private sector. Kama holds Diplomas in Private Secretary and Business Administration, both of which she received from London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, United Kingdom.

Latest Books



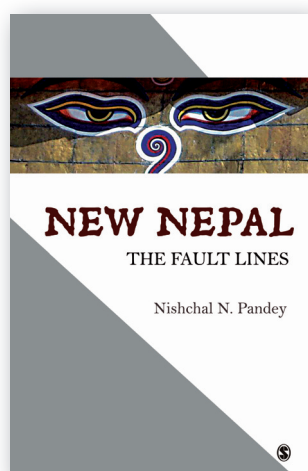
The Emerging Dimensions of SAARC

Edited by S.D. Muni, ISAS, July 2010
Published by Cambridge University Press India

With the dawn of the twenty-first century, South Asian region has undergone radical transformation. It has witnessed a strong democratic sweep. Most of the South Asian economies have registered impressive growth trajectories. Some of its countries have also emerged as the hub of global terrorism. The international community has become far more involved in South Asian affairs due to the nuclearisation of the region. SAARC cannot but keep pace with the changing regional dynamics. It has moved ahead on its economic agenda and expanded its reach not only by adding new members (Afghanistan) but also by opening itself to the participation of many other countries, including China, Iran and the United States, as Observers.

The Emerging Dimensions of SAARC is an attempt to look at the changing dynamics of South Asia and to learn whether SAARC will take regional cooperation and integration in their various dimensions closer to reality. S.D. Muni, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, was the editor of the volume. He has compiled essays contributed by eminent academics and analysts, not only from most of the SAARC countries, but also from those joined as Observers. Besides looking at the trade and economic dimension of SAARC, these essays discuss the security, political and cultural aspects of regional cooperation among the South Asian countries.

To purchase a copy, please visit www.cambridgeindia.org.



New Nepal: The Fault Lines

Nishchal Nath Pandey, ISAS, May 2010
Published by SAGE Publications

This book analyses the tumultuous situation in post-republic Nepal, with spot diagnosis of the major issues facing the country such as federal structure, security sector reform, armed movement in the terai, and religious clashes that have wide implications for India and China.

While there is no disagreement over the issue of state restructuring itself, *New Nepal: The Fault Lines* deals with possible spinoffs of the failure to address the questions of identity, ethnicity, language, religion, region, and culture in 'New Nepal'. Security sector governance, the structure of the political system and the relations between various organs of the state are yet to be determined while the law and order situation, supply of daily essentials, and immediate economic relief to the rural hinterlands is already testing the patience of the people. Political parties are once again resorting to the same old addiction of forming and dismantling governments, knowing well that this will be disastrous to the nascent democracy. The writing of the new constitution will only be a small step towards producing a stable country.

The book will be of immense interest to academics in the fields of politics, international relations, and South Asian studies, and international think tanks, research institutions and diplomatic communities interested in studies on Nepal and South Asia.

To purchase a copy, please visit www.sagepublications.com.

Latest Publications

ISAS Briefs

President Obama's India Visit: Substance in Symbolism, S.D Muni, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 16 November 2010.

QEII and India's Responses, S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 16 November 2010.

India Looks East: Encircling China or Enlightened National Interest?, Gayathri Lakshminarayan, Research Associate, ISAS, 10 November 2010.

Indian Prime Minister's Visit to East and Southeast Asia: Economics Drives Strategy, Suvi Dogra, Research Associate, ISAS, 03 November 2010.

Untangling the Ayodhya Verdict, Ronojoy Sen, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 05 October 2010.

Parliamentary Elections in Afghanistan: Imperfect, Yet Necessary, Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 07 September 2010.

Pakistan Floods: Coping with Disaster, Rajshree Jetly, Research Fellow, ISAS, 27 August 2010.

H1B Visa Fee Hike: Will Indo-US Ties be Affected?, Sinderpal Singh, Research Fellow, ISAS, 26 August 2010.

The 2010 Commonwealth Games: Will India Pull It Off?, Syeda Sana Rahman, Research Associate, ISAS, 26 August 2010.

South Asian University: Catalyst for Regional Cooperation?, Suvi Dogra, Research Associate, ISAS, 20 August 2010.

India-Pakistan Foreign Ministers Meeting: The Impasse Continues, Rajshree Jetly, Research Fellow, ISAS, 20 July 2010.

The Bhopal Tragedy Verdict: Can India Handle Industrial Disasters?, Amitendu Palit, Head (Development & Programmes) and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 24 June 2010.

United States-India Strategic Dialogue: Still Waiting for Obama?, Sinderpal Singh, Research Fellow, ISAS, 15 June 2010.

The West Bengal Municipal: End of the Road for the Left?, Tridivesh Singh Maini, Research Associate, ISAS, 09 June 2010.

Karzai Visits the United States: A Mutual Opportunity to Bury Hatchets?, Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 25 May 2010.

India and Pakistan Meeting: Third Time Lucky?, Rajshree Jetly, Research Fellow, ISAS, 05 May 2010.

SAARC at Twenty Five, S.D. Muni, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 04 May 2010.

Monetary Policy Pressures in India: A Comment, S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 16 April 2010.

Restoring Parliamentary Democracy in Pakistan, Rajshree Jetly, Research Fellow, ISAS, 14 April 2010.

Setting the Stage for a New Global Nuclear Order: The American Approach, Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 12 April 2010.

India's Changing Priorities, S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 11 March 2010.

ISAS Insights

Explaining Realignment, Sumit Ganguly, Rabindranath Tagore Chair in Indian Cultures and Civilizations, Indiana University, Bloomington; and Director, India Studies Institute and Professor, Department of Political Science, Indiana University, Bloomington, United States, 19 November 2010.

Disorder in the Global Economic Order, Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 21 October 2010.

Bangladeshi Courts: Reaffirmation of Democratic and Secular Norms, Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 19 October 2010.

Inflation, Growth and the 3D: South Asian Perspectives, M. Shahidul Islam, Research Associate, ISAS, 15 September 2010.

A New Priority in India's Look East Policy: Evolving Bilateral Relations with Bangladesh, Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 31 August 2010.

Mining in India: Separating Growth from Development?, Amitendu Palit, Head (Development & Programmes) and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 26 August 2010.

The RBI Discussion Paper on Entry of New Banks in the Private Sector: A Comment, S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 17 August 2010.

The Recovery, Double-dip or Depression, Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 05 August 2010.

President Zardari in China: Cementing Old Ties, Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 16 July 2010.

The 2010 Commonwealth Games: India's Triumph or Disaster?, Syeda Sana Rahman, Research Associate, ISAS, 09 July 2010.

The Afghan Peace Jirga: Is an End in Sight?, Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 05 July 2010.

Maoism in Bangladesh: Past, Present and Future, Iftexhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 25 June 2010.

The Maoist Movement in Sri Lanka, Dayan Jayatileka, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 02 June 2010.

The Rise and Fall of the Maoist Movement in Pakistan, Ishtiaq Ahmed, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 26 May 2010.

Media and Maoism, Robin Jeffrey, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 19 May 2010.

Socio-Economic Roots of Maoism Post-1980, S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 12 May 2010.

Management of Fiscal Stress: Are Greece's Solutions Relevant for India?, Sasidaran Gopalan, Research Associate, ISAS and S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 11 May 2010.

Karzai's Balancing Act: Bringing 'China' In?, Shanthie Mariet D'Souza, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 07 May 2010.

G.P. Koirala: Nepal's Democracy Icon, S.D. Muni, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 08 April 2010.

India's 'Look East' Policy: Reflecting the Future, Amitendu Palit, Head (Development & Programmes) and Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 05 April 2010.

China and India: Is Policymaking by the Two Asian Giants Merging?, Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 19 March 2010.

'Seeing it Comin': The Post-Parliamentary Scenario in Sri Lanka, Dayan Jayatilaka, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 16 March 2010.

An Analysis of India's Thirteenth Finance Commission Report, S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 10 March 2010.

India and Pakistan: Breaking the Ice, Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 04 March 2010.

ISAS Working Papers

Mission, Money and Machinery: Indian Newspapers in the Twentieth Century, Robin Jeffrey, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 25 November 2010.

Structure and Agency in the Making of Indian Foreign Policy, Sumit Ganguly, Rabindranath Tagore Chair in Indian Cultures and Civilizations, Indiana University, Bloomington; and Director, India Studies Institute and Professor, Department of Political Science, Indiana University, Bloomington, United States, 22 November 2010.

The Threat of the Geeky Goonda: India's Electronic Voting Machines, Robin Jeffrey, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 12 October 2010.

India and China: Emerging Dynamics and Regional Security Perspectives, Rajshree Jetly, Research Fellow, ISAS, 29 September 2010.

From 'Asia' to 'Asia-Pacific': Indian Political Elites and Changing Conceptions of India's Regional Spaces, Sinderpal Singh, Research Fellow, ISAS, 28 September 2010.

The 18th Amendment: Pakistan's Constitution Redesigned, Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 03 September 2010.

The Maoist Insurgency of Nepal: Origin and Evolution, S.D. Muni, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, 28 July 2010.

South Asia's Economic Future With or Without Economic Integration, Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 14 July 2010.

The Naxalite/Maoist Movement in India: A Review of Recent Literature, John Harriss, Professor and Director of the School of International Studies, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, Canada, 08 July 2010.

The Global Governance Group ('3G') and Singaporean Leadership – Can Small be Significant?, Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 19 May 2010.

Asia in the 'Catch-Up' Game: Part 2, Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 10 May 2010.

Asia in the 'Catch-Up' Game: Part 1, Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 09 April 2010.

Bangladesh-China: An Emerging Equation in Asian Diplomatic Calculations, Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 31 March 2010.

India's International Reserves - How Large and How Diversified?, Ramkishan S. Rajan, Associate Professor, George Mason University, Virginia, United States, and Sasidaran Gopalan, Research Associate, ISAS, 03 March 2010.

ISAS Special Reports

India's Asia Policy: A Late Look East, Archana Pandya, MA student at Carleton University's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Ottawa, Canada, and David M. Malone, President of the International Development Research Centre, Canada, 25 August 2010.

Nuclear Power in India, S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, and Himanshu Vishnoi, Senior Vice-President (Finance), M/s Athena Demwe Power Ltd, 03 May 2010.

ISAS in Australia

ISAS took part in two events in Australia in July 2010. The first was a workshop on 'India's Look East Policy' organised jointly with the Australia India Institute (All) on 5 July 2010 at the University of Melbourne. The ISAS delegation was led by Professor Tan Tai Yong, Director of ISAS. ISAS presenters in the workshop included Dr S. Narayan, Head of Research & Visiting Senior Research



ISAS faculty presenting to senior Australian academics and public policy experts at the University of Melbourne

Fellow; Professor S.D. Muni, Visiting Research Professor; Dr Iftekhar Chowdhury, Senior Research Fellow; Ambassador See Chak Mun, Senior Fellow; Dr Amitendu Palit, Head (Development & Programmes) & Visiting Senior Research Fellow and Dr Sinderpal Singh, Research Fellow. The ISAS faculty spoke on different aspects of India's Look East policy such as its strategic, political, economic and regional dimensions. Senior Australian academics, public policy experts and several distinguished participants, including the Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, attended the workshop.

Following the workshop at Melbourne, ISAS organised a roundtable at the University of Adelaide on 7 July 2010. The event was part of the biennial conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia. The roundtable, convened by Professor Tan Tai Yong, included presentations by the entire ISAS faculty mentioned earlier. Senior academics from Australian universities also participated in the roundtable. The event elicited encouraging responses and received positive feedback from the participants.

Approaches to the Development of the Encyclopedia of the Sri Lankan Diaspora

Over 70 prominent leaders of the Sri Lankan community came together and shared their views on drawing up a road map for the preparation of an encyclopedia of the Sri Lankan diaspora. The Encyclopedia of the Sri Lankan Diaspora project has been conceived as an important component of ISAS ongoing research on building a knowledge base of the South Asian diaspora. The project is spearheaded by ISAS.

Speaking at a workshop on approaches to the development of the projected volume of the encyclopedia in June 2010, Singapore's Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam noted that Singapore was the place from which an objective academic study of the complex Sri Lankan diaspora phenomenon could be drawn up.



Distinguished guests at the workshop

Mr Tharman stressed that the encyclopedia of the Sri Lankan diaspora project should be apolitical. He noted that it would be a more challenging project than the encyclopedia of the Indian diaspora, published in 2006 by ISAS. Mr Tharman noted that understanding the circumstances which led to the diaspora during the British colonial period has to be central to the study, particularly for Malaysia and Singapore.

During his welcome address, ISAS Chairman Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, said that the encyclopedia of the Sri Lankan diaspora project would be an appropriate initiative from a Singaporean perspective, and guided by the spirit of assimilation of different ethnicities and cultures.

Emeritus Professor Peter Reeves, Adjunct Professor of South Asian History at the School of Social Sciences and Asian Languages, Perth, shared the concept proposal of the project with participants at the workshop. The panelists included Professor S. D. Muni, Visiting Research Professor and Dr Dayan Jayatileka, Visiting Senior Research Fellow from ISAS, and Dr C. Anandakumar, President-Elect of Asia & Oceania Federation of Obstetrics & Gynaecology.

Sharing his thoughts from the floor, Mr Allen Pathmarajah, President, AJP Pte Ltd, suggested that the project should look purely at factual issues pertaining to the Sri Lankan diaspora, rather than opinions.

Concluding the discussion, Emeritus Professor Reeves said, 'Our aim is to work on the encyclopedia of the Sri Lankan diaspora project in an open and scholarly fashion. It is open to scrutiny. The main aim is to ensure that the book adheres to rules of historical scholarship'.

Latest Events

- Panel Discussion on '**President Obama's Visit to India: Strategic Implications**', 18 November 2010.
- Sixth International Conference on South Asia, '**South Asia in the New Decade: Challenges and Prospects**', 11-12 November 2010. Keynote speaker: Mr Teo Chee Hean, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Republic of Singapore.
- Seminar by Mr R.A. Rajeev, Commissioner, Thane Municipal Corporation, Thane, India, '**Challenges for Urban Management in Mumbai: What Remains to be Achieved?**', 03 November 2010.
- Workshop on '**Trade Policies in South Asia and Southeast Asia: Encouraging Regionalism**', 20 October 2010.
- Panel Discussion on '**Deciphering the Ayodhya Judgement**', 12 October 2010.
- Public Lecture by Mr Sam Pitroda, Adviser to the Prime Minister of India on Public Information Infrastructure and Innovations, Republic of India, '**Innovation and its Impact on Economic Development in India**', 07 October 2010.
- Seminar by Mr Hamish McDonald, Asia-Pacific Editor, The Sydney Morning Herald, '**India and China: Who's Containing Who?**', 01 October 2010.
- Symposium on '**The Political Economy of Maoism - Causes and Consequences**', 20 September 2010.
- Sixth SICCI-ISAS Global Business Leaders Lecture by H.E. Dr M. Veerappa Moily, Minister for Law and Justice, Republic of India, '**India's Legal Landscape: Challenges and the Path Forward**', 08 September 2010.
- Closed-door Discussion by Mr M.J. Akbar, veteran journalist and writer, and former member of the Lok Sabha, '**Kashmir: The Causes and Consequences of Violence**', 30 August 2010.
- Seminar by Professor Rohan Gunaratna, Head, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research Singapore; and Professor of Security Studies, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University Singapore, '**Rehabilitating the Tamil Tigers**', 23 August 2010.
- Seminar by Professor Binod Khadria, Professor of Economics and Education, Jawaharlal Nehru University; and Director of International Migration and Diaspora Studies Project, India, '**Future of South Asian Migration to the OECD Countries: Reflections on India, Pakistan and Bangladesh**', 16 August 2010.
- Seminar by H.E. Dr Sheel Kant Sharma, Secretary-General, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Kathmandu, Nepal, '**South Asian Regionalism: Prospects and Challenges**', 13 August 2010.
- Seminar by Professor Ian Talbot, Professor of History, University of Southampton; and Head of Department and Director of the Centre for Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies, '**Pakistan: Prospects for Stability and Democratic Consolidation**', 13 August 2010.
- Seminar by Professor Adil Najam, Professor of International Relations, Geography and Environment Boston University; and Director, Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future, '**Climate Change, Development and Security: Challenges for South Asia**', 12 August 2010.
- Closed-Door Discussion by Professor Pranab Bardhan, Professor of Economics, University of California, Berkeley, '**Political Economy of India: New Developments?**', 05 August 2010.
- ISAS-Cambridge University Press India Book Launch on '**The Emerging Dimensions of SAARC**', 23 July 2010.
- ISAS-Asian Studies Association of Australia (Adelaide) Roundtable on '**India's Look East Policy**', 07 July 2010.
- ISAS-Australia India Institute Workshop on '**India's Look East Policy**', 05 July 2010.
- Workshop on '**Approaches to the Development of a Projected Volume: The Encyclopedia of the Sri Lankan Diaspora**', 17 June 2010.
- Roundtable Discussion by Dr T.V. Somanathan, Secretary (Monitoring) to the Chief Minister, Tamil Nadu, India, '**Who Governs India? How Decisions are (or are not) Made?**', 10 June 2010.
- Seminar by Mr Rory Medcalf, Lowy Institute for International Policy, Australia, '**Australia-India Relations: Hesitating at the Brink of Partnership**', 08 June 2010.
- Closed-Door Discussion by Mr Karti P. Chidambaram, Member, All India Congress Committee, '**The New Generation in Indian Politics**', 31 May 2010.
- Public Lecture by Professor Sumit Ganguly, Consultant, Institute of South Asian Studies; and Ngee Ann Kongsi Professor of International Relations, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, '**Explaining the Emergence of Liberal Democratic Institutions in India**', 20 May 2010.
- Seminar by Dr C. Raja Mohan, Strategic Affairs Editor, The Indian Express, New Delhi, '**Sino-Indian Maritime Rivalry: Implications for Regional Security**', 06 May 2010.
- Seminar by Dr Samina Ahmed, South Asia Project Director, International Crisis Group, Islamabad, Pakistan, '**Counter-Terrorism Challenges in Afghanistan and Pakistan**', 04 May 2010.
- Closed-Door Discussion by Dr David Malone, President, The International Development Research Centre, Canada, on '**India and China: Can Two Tigers Share a Mountain?**', 22 April 2010.

- Public Lecture by Mr Kapil Sibal, Minister for Human Resource Development, Government of India, '**Higher Education in India: Opportunities and Prospects**', 15 April 2010.
- Seminar by Professor John Harriss, Visiting Research Professor, ISAS, '**Social Policy in the Era of Liberalisation: Has the Indian State Delivered "Reforms Guided by Compassion and Justice"?**', 14 April 2010.
- Panel Discussion on '**Sri Lanka's Parliamentary Elections**', 12 April 2010.
- Seminar by Mrs Bakul Patel, Former Sheriff of Mumbai, '**Prospects of Mumbai as a Regional Financial Hub**', 23 March 2010.
- Closed-door Discussion on '**More than Maoism: Rural Dislocation in South Asia**', 22 March 2010.
- SASP-ISAS Seminar by Dr Joya Chatterji, Editor, Modern Asian Studies & Reader in Modern South Asian History & Fellow, Trinity College, University of Cambridge, '**Migration, Citizenship and the Making of South Asia**', 17 March 2010.
- Seminar by Mr Bill Durodié, Senior Fellow, Centre for Non-Traditional Security, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, '**An Alternative Perspective for Reconciling Growing Energy Demand with Managing Climate Change**', 15 March 2010.
- Seminar by Mr Shahid Javed Burki, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, '**Asia in the "Catch-Up" Game**', 09 March 2010.
- Joint seminar with Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce & Industry, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and PricewaterhouseCoopers, '**Indian Budget 2010**', 04 March 2010.

The Political Economy of Maoism: Causes and Consequences

ISAS organised a two-day conference to discuss the causes and consequences of the Maoist Movement in India. The invited speakers were Professor Nandini Sundar of the Delhi School of Economics, an anthropologist and historian with a long-standing interest in and commitment to people of the Bastar region; Dr P.V. Ramana, a security specialist from the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses who has focused for many years on study of Maoist-related issues; and Mr Kunal Majumder, an investigative journalist from *Tehelka* magazine, who has recently met Maoist cadres in Chhattisgarh.

At the opening session, Dr S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow of ISAS, provided an overview of the socioeconomic conditions in central and eastern India, identifying gaps in knowledge about the activities of the Maoists. This was followed by Dr Amitendu Palit, Head (Development & Programmes) and Visiting Senior Research Fellow of ISAS, who proposed that the high degree of social and political marginalisation in the 'affected areas' could be one explanation for Maoists' popularity in



Captive audience listening to the speaker at the opening session

those regions. Professor Nandini Sundar discussed the 'History and Consequences: Constructing Naxalism as India's Biggest Security Threat' and presented a situation in which ideology, strategic planning, path dependence, individual agency and specific state histories all contributed to shaping the Maoist movement in India.

Mr Kunal Majumder's 'Soundings from Maoist Territory: a Field-Based Enquiry' provided a fascinating account of his encounter with the Maoists near the village of Bastar. In the final session, Dr P.V. Ramana discussed the security viewpoint in detail, predicting that the government would be able to solve the problem of Maoist violence in seven-ten years if it adopts strong measures to fight back, something akin to what he termed the Andhra Pradesh model. In sum, the conference covered different aspects of the Maoist movement in detail, supplementing academic research on the subject with reports from the field drawn from the experiences of the panellists making way for spirited debate.