

# SOUTH ASIA

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# South Asia A Region In Transition

The rise of food and oil prices has had considerable impact on South Asia, with high inflation hitting all the countries in the region. While certain food prices in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh can be controlled by regulating domestic supplies, the economies of South Asia remain exposed to oil and commodity price fluctuations that are linked to global supply and demand.

Political transitions are afoot in a number of countries. Elections brought about new governments in Pakistan, Nepal and Bhutan. Nepal has chosen Maoist leadership, which could have important ramifications along the Indian Red Corridor. In Pakistan, the elections brought together erstwhile political rivals, the Pakistan Peoples Party and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), to form a coalition government. However, the coalition was shortlived – the PML-N resigned from the Cabinet shortly after over differences on the restoration of the deposed judges. Despite the poor showing of the President's supporters at the polls, President Pervez Musharaff has managed to stave off any threat to his presidency. The tiny kingdom of Bhutan has moved towards to democratic rule in a voluntary and peaceful transition.

In India, the United Progressive Alliance government presented its final budget for this term, offering a huge debt waiver for farmers. It is evidently a populist budget, and it was followed by a pay commission hike for all government employees. An important policy reform for the Indian education sector was the Supreme Court judgment in April 2008, which upheld the caste based reservations, with certain amendments. The Indian government will have its hands full sustaining economic growth, controlling inflation and handling foreign policy issues with Nepal and Tibet.

In keeping with the dynamics of South Asia, the Institute of South Asian Studies organised various events, including a joint conference with the East Asian Institute, the South Asia Studies Programme at the Johns Hopkins University and the Center for Policy Research, New Delhi, on social and economic developments in China and India. We also organised a joint conference with Indiana University, Bloomington, and the South Asian Studies Programme at the National University of Singapore on 60 years of India's independence. We continued with the publication of regular briefs, insights and working papers, which can be accessed from our website at [www.isas.nus.edu.sg](http://www.isas.nus.edu.sg).

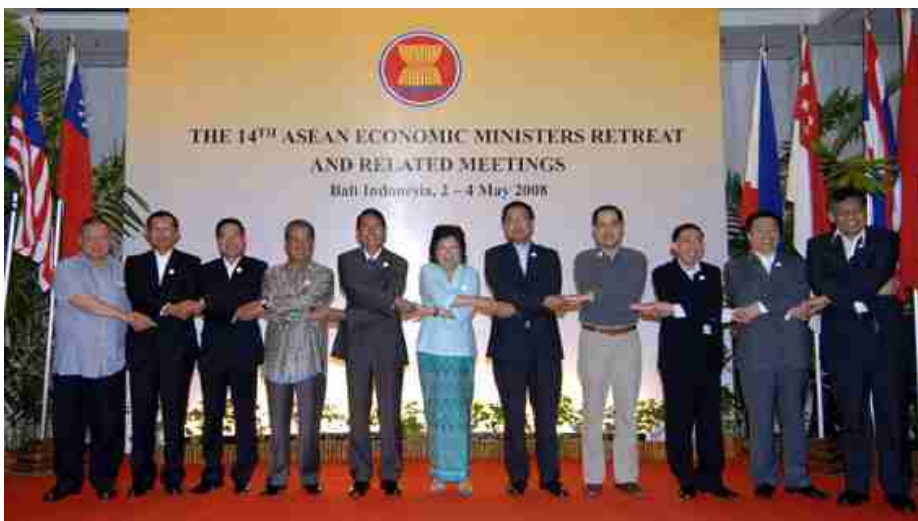
In this issue of the newsletter, we examine the agrarian crisis and the loan waiver scheme in India. At the same time, we highlight the contemporary dimensions of security in South and Southeast Asia. The democratic transitions in Nepal and Bhutan are also featured in this edition. We also look at urban challenges in South Asia. Lastly, we throw some light on post-elections Pakistan and assess the path ahead for the country. As usual, we carry our snippets on South Asia.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter.

Professor Tan Tai Yong  
Director

# Security in South and Southeast Asia: Contemporary Dimensions

*Ambassador See Chak Mun  
Senior Fellow, ISAS*



After the Second World War, South and Southeast Asia were confronted with a different set of security environments. Their threat perceptions were dissimilar and so were their approaches to national security and external powers.

For the non-communist states in Southeast Asia, the threat from communist China was real. Beijing had been providing moral and material support to the communist revolutionary movements in Southeast Asia, such as the Malayan Communist Party and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (or Communist Party of Indonesia). This was reaffirmed by Mao's second-in-command, Lin Biao, who wrote an article published in 1965 in which he said that China would openly support revolution by the emerging forces in other countries.

The fall of Saigon in 1975 seemed to give credence to the domino theory according to which the non-communist states in the rest of Southeast Asia would fall one by one. Ironically, it was the Chinese punitive attack along the Sino-Vietnamese border following Vietnam's invasion of Khmer Rouge-ruled Kampuchea that effectively checked communist Vietnam's expansion in Southeast Asia.

The initial response of non-communist Southeast Asia to the external communist threat was to seek protection through a military alliance with the United States via the Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) which was established in 1955. The Philippines and Thailand, as well as Pakistan (a Central Treaty

Organization member) became members. However, SEATO had no standing forces. As any military intervention would require a decision of unanimity, SEATO was never invoked to intervene in the conflicts in Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia. The treaty organisation was formally disbanded in 1977.

Fear of the United States military withdrawal from South Vietnam led to the formation of the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in August 1967, comprising Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. It was thought that peaceful resolution of conflicts and accelerating economic growth via socio-

economical cooperation among the ASEAN states would be a more effective regional response to counter the threat of communism. At the first ASEAN summit held in Bali in February 1976, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation was signed to signal ASEAN's resolve to settle its intra-regional disputes through conciliation and peaceful means. The ASEAN states also took an early decision to integrate their economies. They signed a Preferential Trade Agreement in order to facilitate the expansion of trade among ASEAN members. This paved the framework for the ASEAN Free Trade Area (CEPT) which was launched in 1992.

ASEAN, as a regional organisation, may not have achieved much success during its early years in economic integration. Nonetheless, the promise of a regional market and a stable external environment began to draw foreign investor interest to ASEAN which also opted for an export-oriented and foreign direct investment (FDI)-driven development strategy. This led to a period of robust economic growth in the ASEAN region. ASEAN's advancement was partly helped by the benevolent view of President Suharto of Indonesia towards ASEAN's development and his concept of regional resilience with Indonesia assuming an implicit leadership role in ASEAN. The ASEAN countries have also tended to accept the World Court's (International Court of Justice) arbitration in settling intra-regional disputes such as the disputes between Indonesia and Malaysia over the islands of Ligitan and Sipadan, as well as between Malaysia and Singapore over Pedra Branca.

By comparison, regional integration in South Asia experienced a rather slow start. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) was established only in December 1985. In fact, South Asia took a rather different growth trajectory. It was only in the 1990s that most of the South Asian states decided to embark on a market-oriented economic strategy. Their threat perceptions were also different from that of the Southeast Asian states. First, there was an absence of a perceived common external security threat to the sub-region. Second, regional security was complicated by the Pakistan-India conflict. War broke out between India and Pakistan immediately after the partition.

Altogether, they fought four wars over a period of 50 years, that is, in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999. Third, separatist and insurgent movements continued to wage armed struggles as part of the legacy of the British colonial era. For instance, the diverse ethnic and tribal communities such as the Nagas in north-eastern India had resisted British colonial government's decision to include them into the territory of an independent Indian state. Assam was ceded to Britain after Burma's defeat in the British-Burmese war in 1826, and the territory was eventually annexed and incorporated into British India. The demand to set up their own homelands had led to the emergence of tribal separatist groups like the United Liberation Front of Assam and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim.

To a large extent, regional integration efforts in South Asia were impeded by the political and military rivalry between India and Pakistan. It was only in January 2006 that the SAARC members signed the South Asian Free Trade Agreement. Obstacles against intra-subregional trade remain high, and that was partly because India which accounted for 80 percent of South Asia's gross domestic product (GDP) was, by far, the predominant economy in the sub-region. From India's point of view, economic and trade concessions would appear to be primarily a one-sided affair. It was not until the Narasimha Rao government that trade liberalisation and the opening of the Indian economy to FDI really took off as part of the economic reforms programme that began in July 1991.

Being the predominant power, India took an assertive role in the affairs of the sub-continent. This was more evident during the governments of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, exemplified by India's intervention in the Bangladesh war of independence in 1971, the deployment of Indian peacekeeping troops in Sri Lanka in 1987 to ensure a ceasefire by the Tamil LTTE, and the despatch of Indian troops to quell an attempted coup against the Maldives government in 1988. The so-called Gujral doctrine that was announced by Foreign Minister (later Prime Minister) I. K. Gujral suggested a softer approach to India's neighbours but that did not last long enough to have any significant impact on India's foreign relations. In short, the absence of a perceived common external threat and



the asymmetrical power relationship in South Asia meant that there were fewer incentives for the South Asian states to pursue common policies to keep out intervention by hostile extra-regional powers, or place a strong emphasis on regional integration in order to facilitate economic growth, as in the case of ASEAN.

### **The current security scenario**

After the Cold War, the triangular United States-China-Soviet Union power relationship which shaped the international order was replaced by a new triangular United States-China-Japan relationship that would underpin the stability of the Asia Pacific region. The rise of China and India would add a new dimension to this complex strategic inter-relationship.

Driven by the desire to protect their energy resources and the sea lanes which carry them, both China and India have been stepping up their efforts to bolster their naval presence in the Indian Ocean which stretches from the Straits of Hormuz to the Straits of Malacca. The ability to control the oceans and to deny their use by one's adversaries has become a strategic imperative. This was demonstrated by the intimidatory effect of the United States' Sixth Fleet rushing up to the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 East Pakistan war. Similarly, the effective blockade of the port of Karachi by the Indian navy contributed significantly to the outcome of the 1999 Kargil war between India and Pakistan.

As both China and India appear determined to acquire nuclear-powered submarines armed with submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM), this could raise tensions in the Indian Ocean. When India tested its own SLBM in February this year, Pakistan protested and saw it as a new threat to Pakistan as SLBMs would provide India with a credible second strike capability in the event of the outbreak of a nuclear conflict. On India's part, it has warned that development of the Gwadar port in Pakistan with Chinese assistance would have serious strategic implications for India. In a recent speech, India's Chief of Navy, Admiral Suresh Mehta, said, "Being only 180

kilometres from the exit of Strait of Hormuz, Gwadar would put Pakistan astride major international sea lanes of the Persian Gulf, thereby enabling her to exercise control over the energy jugular of the world, and also easy interdiction of Indian tankers.”

However, rivalry between China and India is likely to be balanced by a pragmatic calculation to cooperate, as each of them would want to avoid any direct confrontation lest it would give an undue leverage to the United States which still wields predominant power and influence in the Asia Pacific region. China and India would also want to hedge their bets with other powers such as Russia in order to retain maximum flexibility of policy actions in a shifting strategic environment. Moreover, their rapid economic rise is also a good sedative for war, and both China and India have declared their intentions of pursuing peaceful development and good neighbourliness.

In recent years, South Asia and Southeast Asia have been experiencing robust economic growth that would help override whatever domestic socio-political risks and uncertainties that they face. According to Asian Development Bank’s Annual Report Outlook 2007, the economies of Southeast Asia expanded by six percent in aggregate in 2006. The average GDP growth rate of South Asia was even higher, at 8.7 percent. Rising commodities prices, as well as increase in domestic consumption and investment levels have contributed to this robust growth.

The risks of intra-regional conflict appear fairly minimal in South and Southeast Asia. While the levels of socio-political risks vary from country to country, they do face a common threat from jihadist and separatist movements, for example, in southern Thailand and southern Philippines. In South Asia, until the recent ceasefire, the Maoist insurgency posed a grave threat to the government in Nepal. In India, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh has described the Naxalite movement as the single most serious threat to India’s national security.



September 11 brought a new dimension to the security concerns among South and Southeast Asian states. The arrests of Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) members by Singapore in December 2001 led to the discovery of a whole network of regional Islamist militant groups with links to Al-Qaeda. The roots of the JI could be traced to the original vision of an Islamic Indonesia which had now been expanded to include Malaysia, Indonesia and Mindanao, as well as Singapore and Brunei. From the 1990s, selected JI recruits had trained in Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. They perhaps shared similar training with jihadist groups operating in South Asia. Recent bomb blasts in India were reported to be perpetrated by jihadist groups based in Bangladesh but which had links to jihadist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

How Pakistan and the United States respond to the resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan would have profound impact on the security environment not only in South Asia but also in Southeast Asia. Here I quote Singapore’s Minister Mentor, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, in an article published in The Washington Post on 8 March 2008, “The Taleban is again gathering strength, and a Taleban victory in Afghanistan or Pakistan would reverberate



# ISAS Appoints Director



The Institute of South Asian Studies is pleased to announce the appointment of Professor Tan Tai Yong as its Director. The appointment takes effect from 1 June 2008.

Professor Tan has been an integral part of the Institute since its inception. He was Acting Director of the Institute from July 2004 to July 2006 and from April 2007 to May 2008. Currently, he is also a Professor of History and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the National University of Singapore.

Professor Tan has written extensively on South Asian history as well as on Southeast Asia and Singapore. His recent publications include *Creating 'Greater Malaysia': Decolonisation and the Politics of Merger* (2008); *The Garrison State* (2005); *The Transformation of Southeast*

*Asia: International Perspectives on De-colonisation* (co-edited, 2003); and *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia* (co-authored, 2000).



through the Muslim world. It would influence the grand debate among Muslims on the future of Islam. A severely retrograde form of Islam would be seen to have defeated modernity twice: first the Soviet Union, then the United States. There would be profound consequences, especially in the campaign against terrorism.”

Despite differences in their threat perceptions, security concerns about terrorism seem to provide a common thread

that ties the two sub-regions together. Nevertheless, apart from bilateral intelligence exchanges, there does not seem to be any effective mechanism that would provide for inter-regional cooperation to deal with this threat. One possibility is the ASEAN Regional Forum which includes both India and Pakistan. Established formally in 1994 in Bangkok, it provides a forum for regular dialogue on confidence-building measures and preventive diplomacy. The issue of maritime security has become an issue of recent concern after 9/11 as terrorist attacks, for example, on major port facilities in the region would cause severe disruption to international trade and which would generate the stunning psychological impact that terrorists aim to achieve.

The two sub-regions will invariably find themselves part of a new power structure in Asia which has yet to be worked out among the major powers, especially the United States, China and India. It is not clear how the future regional architecture would look like but several new groupings (for example, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation [SCO]), ASEAN Plus Three, and the East Asia Summit) have emerged that would suggest a model which would combine both power rivalry and accommodation. For example, India has been invited as an observer of the SCO and China has been accorded a similar status in the SAARC.

A system may eventually emerge where no single power can claim an exclusive sphere of influence or be the ultimate arbitrator of power distribution in Asia. That is not too bad a scenario but ambitions and intentions are difficult to discern. It is fortunate that both the rising powers in Asia, that is, China and India, share a vital common interest in preserving stability for their economic growth. That would be a positive motivating factor in shaping the future security scenario in South and Southeast Asia. ■

*This paper was presented at the international seminar on “The Current Security Scenario in South and Southeast Asia”, in Kolkata, India, on 25-26 March 2008.*

# Post-election Pakistan: Issues and Prospects

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On 25 March 2008, Mr Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani assumed charge as the 26<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Pakistan. However, the euphoria of successful democratic transition that followed the 18 February 2008 polls has more or less evaporated and uncertainties loom large over the political future of the country. Moreover, the country faces several daunting challenges, ranging from Islamic militancy and political turmoil to a depressed economy.

Pakistanis went to the polls on 18 February 2008. The previous ruling party and Musharraf's ally, the Pakistan Muslim League Qaid-e-Azam (PML-Q), suffered a devastating defeat along with the Islamic parties. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), of the slain leader, Ms Benazir Bhutto, emerged as the largest party (with 121 seats in a house of 342 seats) in the National Assembly. However, it did not have the simple majority necessary to form the government. Therefore, it formed a coalition government with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the second largest party (with 91 seats), the Awami National Party (ANP) and the Muttahida Majlis Amal (MMA). The PPP nominated its second vice-chairman, Mr Gillani, for the premiership, after much wrangling among the many contenders for the post within the party.

The PPP co-chairperson, Mr Asif Ali Zardari, widower of the slain leader, Ms Bhutto, formed a broad base government based on "national consensus". However, it seems more of a pragmatic decision than a goodwill gesture, as the PPP needed the ANP and the MMA to form the government in two of the four provincial assemblies, as well as in the centre. It is the first time in history of the country that two major national parties have formed a

coalition government at the centre and that too between the two traditional political rivals, the left-centre PPP and the right-centre PML-N. There are wide differences in ideology and hardcore policy issues between the two main coalition partners, such as the reinstatement of the deposed Supreme Court judges, President Musharraf's role, and the strategy for the war on terror.

## **Restoration of the Judges**

A key political challenge for the coalition government is the restoration the deposed judges, including Supreme Court Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry.

The lawyers' movement to restore the deposed judges was primarily initiated by the lawyers but it has also garnered support from across the civil society. The movement has sustained itself effectively over one year against all odds. Moreover, it is not confined to the legal fraternity anymore; rather it seems to have assumed a political character in a wider institutional conflict within the Pakistani society between the judiciary, the legislative, the executive and the army.

Both the leaders, Mr Sharif of the PML-N and Mr Zardari of the PPP, signed a declaration to reinstate the judges within 30 days of the commencement of the first parliamentary session. The deadline passed without any breakthrough. While Mr Sharif has been steadfast, the PPP leadership seems somewhat ambiguous and has allegedly stepped back from its commitment or desire to limit the tenure of the Chief Justice while curtailing his powers. The PPP's





reluctance is understandable as the restored Chief Justice may challenge the validity of the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) and Musharraf's presidency. President Musharraf had promulgated the NRO to withdraw all corruption cases against the PPP leadership.

The issue has already caused a rift between the coalition parties. The PML-N politicians have decided to resign from their cabinet posts. Nevertheless, the PML-N will continue to support the PPP government from the outside. On the eve of this decision, the PML-N leader, Mr Sharif, said, "We wanted the coalition government to remain intact but were left with no other choice than to walk out because of the deposed judges not being restored". There is still hope that some compromise will be reached among all the stakeholders, including the deposed Chief Justice, sooner than later. However, the failure of the coalition government to reach an agreement and reinstate the deposed judges could unleash a fresh wave of protests undermining the fragile coalition and destabilising the country.

### **President Musharraf's Future**

The poll results were a blow to the President Musharraf's regime. The PML-N was in the forefront in calling for his resignation, along with the civil society. However, President Musharraf categorically rejected such calls and expressed his willingness to work with the new government led by the PPP.

Even if a reinstated Chief Justice avoids any ruling against Musharraf's presidency, the latter faces the threat of impeachment. The ruling coalition could muster the necessary two-third majority to impeach the president or make certain changes in the constitution. However, the PPP has not pressed ahead with the impeachment move but in all likelihood will

be content with curtailing presidential powers, particularly the power to dissolve the elected assemblies.

In this situation, President Musharraf is left with only two viable options, either to be content with being a figurehead of state or to resign. If he chooses the third way of dissolving the elected assemblies or imposing another martial law, he will not only put his own future in danger but of the country's as well.

### **War on Terror**

It seems ironic, at first glance, that the PPP-led coalition government has initiated negotiations with the Islamic militants, the alleged murderers of the party leader Ms Bhutto. Nevertheless, it is not surprising, given the unpopularity of the "war on terror" and the way Washington had been urging President Musharraf to fight this war. The indiscriminate use of force alone against the tribal militants, the Taliban and the Al-Qaida did not work. In fact, it accelerated militancy in Pakistani settled areas.

The peace process initiated by the coalition government with the militants is part of a strategy of the coalition partners to tackle terrorism, particularly the left nationalist ANP, which swept away the polls in the border province. In the first such move, the government released Sufi Muhammad, leader of a local tribal militant organisation, Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi, from jail. Apparently, he has renounced militancy. The government is pushing for negotiations with the tribal militants on the condition that no foreign terrorists will be provided sanctuary in the tribal areas.

There has been a mixed reaction to these developments. While Kabul and Washington have expressed "concerns", they have not disapproved of the move. On the other hand, Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Boucher, said, "It is important to negotiate with the tribes...to end violence...the problem is in enforcement...it is the outcome that matters." The European Union's Foreign Policy Chief, Javier Solana, said, "We support reconciliation". In another relevant development, Kabul and Islamabad agreed to resume the joint peace *Jirga* (tribal elders meeting) held in August last year. Nevertheless, there remains skepticism about these deals, as similar truces have been signed in the past but have failed for one reason or another.

The new Pakistani government seems committed to fighting terrorism. However, there may emerge some differences on tactics between Islamabad and Washington. It would be difficult for the latter to dictate terms to an elected government, which itself is walking on the tightrope in dealing with domestic politics.

Pakistan's transition to democracy is in trouble. With the PML-N's withdrawal from the coalition and the PPP's reluctance to reinstate the deposed judges, things have become uncertain once again. However, with a democratically elected government in office, the country has crossed the first milestone towards stability and prosperity this year. Acts of terrorism have declined. The economic fundamentals remain strong and a basic infrastructure is in place to go forward. Pakistan is well poised geo-economically as well as strategically to emerge as a progressive nation in harmony with its neighbours. What Pakistan lacks is visionary leadership. Will the current politicians be able to provide that leadership? Given the current political situation, it is becoming increasingly difficult to believe so. ■

# Nepal and Bhutan: From Kingdoms to Democracies

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A democratic wave seems to be sweeping through South Asia. Not only are military autocracies and one party dominance polities opening up to democratic processes, traditional monarchies are also liberalising to adopt democratic institutions and imbibing them with representative norms. The most spectacular and unprecedented transition to democracy in South Asia has been taking place for the past couple of years in the two Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal and Bhutan. The monarchies have either retreated or are being forced to exit in these countries and, in the place of traditional feudal values and norms of governance, democratic institutions and representative processes are being evolved and strengthened. Though the direction of change in these two monarchies is similar, the pace and dynamics have been different and deserve to be watched carefully.

## **The Democratic Drives**

Nepal has been driven to democracy through a radical, even violent process. For 10 years, the Maoists insurgency fought a violent “peoples” war, accounting for 14,000 deaths, to eliminate monarchy and transform socio-economic conditions. This insurgency joined hands with the mainstream political parties to precipitate a “peoples’ uprising” (*Jan Andolan*) in 2006, in response to the King’s display of his ruthless autocratic ambitions, under which he assumed direct power in 2005, in the name of crushing the Maoists “terrorist movement”. The “peoples’ uprising” of Nepal has been an

unprecedented example of the peoples’ power in the whole of South Asia. Though essentially it was a Maoists agenda, all the political forces behind this uprising have committed themselves to the establishment of a republic in Nepal. This was the principal agenda on which all the parties had gone to the recently-held elections, and since the Maoists have been overwhelmingly supported by the popular mandate, whatever little doubt remained on the question of retaining a ceremonial monarchy has withered away.

Bhutan’s march towards democracy, in a sharp contrast with the Nepalese situation, has been top-driven. The King took the initiative in 2005 to bind the traditional monarchy into constitutional norms and transfer effective governance to representative institutions. The Bhutanese ruling classes were not prepared for this transition and the Bhutanese people, except for the ethnic Nepalis of Bhutan, by and large, were happy with the ways they were being governed. The King of Bhutan, Jigmey Singhye Wangchuk, campaigned throughout the kingdom to get his democratic initiative endorsed by his citizens. There is no clear evidence, but the possibility of the Bhutan King being prompted by the developments in the neighbouring kingdom of Nepal cannot be ruled out. The Bhutanese King must have felt that





Nepal's King's attempt to ride against the wave of popular aspirations was counter-productive. He must have also felt that the ideological spill-over of the developments in Nepal would also be felt in his kingdom, sooner or later, particularly in the context of decades of old demands of democracy that had died out, now raised by the Nepali subjects of Bhutan. There has also been a serious ethnic divide between the Drukpas and Nepalis of Bhutan, precipitating a presence of more than 100,000 refugees in Nepal. The Maoists cadres in Nepal had infiltrated the United Nations-administered camps of Bhutanese refugees and a demand for Bhutan's democratisation was being strongly revived by these refugees. The Bhutan King, therefore, thought it prudent to open up the political system at his own initiative rather than being overtaken by the forces of history, as in the case his Nepali counterpart.



### **Elections and Outcomes**

In their respective marches towards democracy, both Nepal and Bhutan have gone through elections. While Bhutan's popular elections were held on 24 March 2008 for constituting a parliament where effective power would be vested, the Nepal elections were held barely two weeks later on 10 April 2008 for a Constituent Assembly which will draft a new republic and inclusive democracy. The results of both these elections have been unexpected. In Bhutan, there were two contesting parties, the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) or the Bhutan Peace Party and the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). Both the parties were led by former ministers in the King's royal government and they swear their loyalty to the King. As such, there was not much between them to contest for. It was expected that both the parties would do well and emerge with only a marginal difference in their strengths after the elections. However, to the surprise of everyone, the DPT had a landslide victory, securing 45 of the 47 seats contested in the elections while the PDP secured only two seats. The leader of the victorious DPT, Jigme Y. Thinley, who has become the Prime Minister, however, assured that, notwithstanding this massive mandate, he will govern with transparency and accountability to develop healthy democratic traditions in the country.

Nepal's elections have been more bitterly fought with numerous instances of violence, electoral mal-practices and intense campaigning, as compared to the Bhutan elections. The main agenda of every party has, however, been similar, that of establishing a republic and an inclusive democracy. This has primarily been a Maoist agenda for more than 10 years, as mentioned earlier. The people accepted the Maoists commitment to this agenda but had doubts on the sincerity of the other mainstream political parties, especially the Nepali Congress (NC) and the Communist Party, United Marxist Leninist. The mainstream parties were overconfident, assuming that the Maoists strong arm methods of scaring people to vote for them would prove to be counter-productive and the Maoists would face an electoral humiliation. They had grossly underestimated the Maoists organisation, motivation and the absence of any blemish on their governance record (which was not there at all). The possibility of fear, whipped up by the Maoists campaign style and the activities of the Young

Communist League cadres getting them votes, cannot be ruled out but the alienation of the mainstream parties from the popular grassroots and their past failures to deliver on their promises proved to be the greatest asset of the Maoists in the Nepal elections. No wonder, the Maoists garnered more than 30 percent of the popular vote and secured 120 seats out of the 240 contested for "first past the post". The party next to them is the NC, trailing far behind with only 37 seats and 21 percent of popular vote. The Maoists will still not have absolute majority in the Constituent Assembly but they would be the largest group with nearly 230 seats in a House of 601, and no major change can be adopted without their approval.

A very significant role was played in the Nepal elections by the ethnic factor. The agenda of inclusive democracy was a reflection of representation to the hitherto neglected and marginalised social groups like the Madhesis, Janjatis (tribals), Dalits (untouchables) and women. The Madhesi parties, unfortunately, contested against each other, and were able to secure around 43 seats among themselves. A large number of tribal and Dalit candidates were also victorious. All these members of the Constituent Assembly would assert their rights and interests in the new Constitution. There was no direct reference to the ethnic issue in the Bhutan elections but this issue is critical in Bhutan's evolution of democracy. About nine persons of Nepali origin have been elected on the DPT tickets but this may not be an adequate representation of the strength of the Nepali population, even after discounting the refugees in Nepal camps, who may be dispersed in third countries, including the United States.

### **The Challenges Ahead**

Constituting a parliament in Bhutan and a Constituent Assembly in Nepal through popular elections may only be the beginning, and not an end, of the process of democratic transition in the South Asian kingdoms. The challenges ahead are, indeed, formidable. In Bhutan, democratic norms are still limited to the King's sermons; they have to percolate down to the masses who are generally uneducated and unexposed to the forces of change. There is no administrative or political experience or precedents to build new representative institutions and operate them effectively. Even the opposition is so weak in the parliament that the evolution of parliamentary practices, procedures and norms will

take a long time and sustained efforts. The ethnic harmony in Bhutan is also very superficial and, unless the Nepali ethnic question is resolved amicably, political participation will have only a muted and truncated meaning for the majority of the Nepalis.

In Nepal, the Maoist commitment to democratic norms is still very fragile. A big question remains whether they will painfully learn to adjust themselves with democratic procedures or twist these procedures to adjust them to their political requirements and ideological vision of a “new democracy”. They may not find it easy to carry along all the diverse and mutually-conflicting political and ethnic formations that have emerged in the wake of the “peoples’ uprising”. The Maoists are prepared for a smooth exit of the King but it remains to be seen if the King is reconciled to that and would

not work in his own ways to sabotage Nepal’s transition to a republic. Writing a Constitution that makes room for all the aspirations and expectations is going to be a very complex and exacting process of mutual compromises. Both the victors and the vanquished of the April elections will find it painful to make such compromises and live up to them. There may, however, be no going back on democratic transition in both the Himalayan kingdoms. The regional and global atmosphere is conducive to a democratic evolution and consolidation, and the international community should generally be helpful and forthcoming, as it has been so far, in this respect. The political structure of democracy can be sustained if the international community supports the growth of social and economic flesh and blood for these structures by creatively engaging with the emerging leadership in these countries. ■

## Inaugural India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue



During the dialogue session, the two sides discussed the current status of bilateral relations between India and Singapore and explored new areas of cooperation. The development and relations with South and West Asia, and Southeast Asia were also areas of focus during the Dialogue. The two sides also exchanged views on the growing political, military and economic dominance of China, and the role and impact of the United States on Asia.

The delegates also had the opportunity to engage Minister for Defence, Mr Teo Chee Hean; Minister for Trade and Industry, Mr Lim Hng Kiang; and

Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan. At the same time, the Indian delegates called on Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

Singapore hosted the inaugural India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue (ISSD) from 5 to 7 May 2008. Coordinated by the Institute of South Asian Studies and the Confederation of Indian Industry, the dialogue featured eminent Singaporean and Indian panelists from all walks of life, including politics, economics, defence, business, media, think-tanks, the diplomatic corp and the civil society.

The ISSD was announced by Singapore’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, George Yeo, and India’s Minister of External Affairs, Pranab Mukherjee, on 19 June 2007, during the latter’s official visit to Singapore from 18 to 20 June 2007.

The purpose of the ISSD is for India and Singapore to arrive at a better understanding of each other’s views and positions on global political, security and economic landscapes, regional security issues, areas in which India and Singapore have convergent and divergent interests and cooperation in multilateral fora.

The second ISSD will be held in New Delhi in February 2009.



# India: The Agrarian Crisis and the Loan Waiver Scheme

*Dr K. V. Ramaswamy  
Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS*

In his budget 2008 speech, Mr P. Chidambaram, India's Finance Minister, proposed a scheme of debt waiver and debt relief for Indian farmers. The total value of loans waived is estimated to be Indian Rupees (Rs) 600 billion (US\$15 billion). This was in response to rising farmer indebtedness and their inability to repay their short term crop loans taken from banks and moneylenders, leading many of them to commit suicide. It is reported that, in Maharashtra alone, 1,427 farmers committed suicide in 2006. One of the major causal factors is reported to be rising farmer indebtedness. This policy initiative has raised several issues and different views have been vociferously presented. They range from those welcoming the policy announcement as it helps poor farmers, and those skeptical as they perceived it to weaken the farmer's incentive to repay in the future and, therefore, enlarging the non-performing assets of commercial banks. Meanwhile, the government is in the process of working out the details of financing the loan waiver scheme. The basic fact is that Indian agriculture is in a deep crisis. The farmer indebtedness is only a symptom of a larger disease that is the agrarian crisis. What are the structural (long-term) features of this agrarian crisis?

The report of the expert committee on agricultural indebtedness, appointed by the Indian government (Ministry of Finance, July 2007) has set out the causes of this crisis as deep rooted in unmistakable terms.

First, the continuous decline in the share of agriculture in gross domestic products (GDP), from 41 percent in 1972-73 to 20.2 percent in 2004-05 without a corresponding decline in the number of workers depending on agriculture (247 million workers were engaged in agriculture in 2004-05). This slow diversification of the workforce away from agriculture has resulted in a sharp decline in the relative productivity of workers in agriculture (relative to non-agriculture). The relative productivity declined from 26 percent of non-agriculture in 1972-73 to 20 percent in 2004-05. The increasing burden of the labour force on cultivable land has led to sharp declines in the average size of holdings (1.06 acre) and growing marginalisation.

Second, the agricultural sector's growth rate has decelerated with increasing inefficiency of input use (unbalanced and excessive use of chemical fertilizers) adversely affecting profitability and farmer incomes. The income from agriculture is increasingly found to be inadequate to meet the consumption requirements of farm households.

Third, more seriously, the growth rate of food grains fell from 2.8 percent per annum in the 1980s to 1.2 percent in the 1990s. The



1990s growth rate of food grains production (1.2 percent) was much lower than the rate of growth of population (1.9 percent) in the same period. This was due to the deceleration of crop yields (output per acre) of rice (3.5 percent to 0.99 percent) and wheat (3.1 percent to 1.3 percent) in the 1990s relative to the 1980s.

Fourth, the terms of trade for agriculture have stagnated in recent years. The price of agricultural products, relative to non-agricultural products, has not improved since 1997 and, therefore, the purchasing power of farmers has decelerated. The export of agricultural goods has not improved as international trade in agriculture slowed down after the East Asian crisis in 1997. What has been the role of public policy in accentuating the farmers' distress?

The crisis in agriculture is an outcome, the expert group has argued, of the decline in public support systems, including public investment in agriculture. The share of public investment (gross capital formation) in agriculture declined from 43 percent in 1980-81 to 17 percent in 1999-2000. Contrary to the standard expectation, private investment failed to offset this reduction in public investment. Investment in agriculture, as a share of total investment in India, fell to below 10 percent in 2000-01 and did not recover in subsequent years. This is in contrast to India's public policy stance towards agriculture in the 1960s. The green revolution initiated in the mid-1960s was built upon a system of state-supported incentives, subsidies and substantial investment in agricultural infrastructure, such as irrigation, seed production and distribution systems. The expansion of commercial banks credit to agriculture has been very impressive as they accounted for 70 percent of institutional credit to agriculture in recent years.



However, the share of agricultural credit in total commercial credit declined to 11 percent in 2006 as against the policy target of 18 percent attained in the late 1980s. Increasingly, a large share of loans seems to go to large farms (more than five acres), as compared to small and marginal farmers (less than five acres). Above all, the farmers are found to incur considerable transaction costs (paper work, multiple visits and bribes) in obtaining loans due to complex land mortgage procedures. The neglect of agriculture by the formal financial institutions forces the cultivator households to seek moneylenders and non-institutional agencies. This showed up in a steep rise in the share of non-institutional agencies (read moneylenders) in cultivator household debt that increased from 31 percent in 1991 to 39 percent in 2002. The dependence on non-institutional agencies is found to be high for those having less than one hectare of land (marginal farmers). The dependence on moneylenders creates an environment of high interest rates (exploitative?). Consider the differences in actual interest rates charged by these two groups of lenders (banks versus moneylenders) – interest is found to lie in the range of 20 to 25 percent as against 12 to 20 percent charged by the institutional agencies (commercial banks and credit cooperative societies). All these factors have contributed to widespread farmer indebtedness.

It is important to record that the farmer suicide rates were highest in those states and in those years with high a proportion of area under cotton cultivation. This is pointed out in a paper by Dr S. Mitra and Dr S. Shroff in a study published in the Economic and Political Weekly (8 December 2007), for example, Karnataka (4.5 percent of area under cotton cultivation in 2000-2001) and Andhra Pradesh (eight percent of area under cotton cultivation in 2004-05). They observed a positive association between suicide rates and an increase in the area under cotton cultivation in the cotton belt in Maharashtra, the Vidharbha region. The decline in the profitability of cotton cultivation, due to an increase in its cost of cultivation caused by a variety of factors and the lack of irrigation facilities, are found to have made cotton farming unremunerative, intensifying farmer indebtedness.

The incidence of debt amongst farm household is found to be more than 48 percent (43 million out of 89 million farmer households in 2003). The total debt of farmer households is estimated at Rs650 billion from financial institutions and Rs480 billion from moneylenders. In brief, the total debt outstanding is roughly equal to US\$28.5 billion at current exchange rates. The loan waiver scheme will benefit only those who have borrowed from financial institutions. Some equity is built into the loan waiver scheme by providing 100 percent waiver to only small and marginal farmers. The rest of the borrowers will get a one-time settlement with a rebate of 25 percent. Who bears the cost of this loan write-off? Expectedly, it would be the central

government but the cost is not expected to make a serious impact on the fiscal position of the Indian government, given the current buoyant tax revenue position. A more problematic issue is that of moral hazard, that is, the loan waiver will encourage farmers not to care about loan repayment in the future in the expectation of a bailout and this, in turn, is likely to inhibit financial institutions to lend to farmers. If this turns out to be true, then the farmers will have lesser access to institutional credit in the future. Leaving this aside, the emphasis, hereafter, should be on measures that accelerate investment in agriculture like irrigation and other types of rural infrastructure to improve productivity such that no government in future needs to think of another loan waiver scheme. ■



# Urban Challenges for South Asia

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*Dr Shreekant Gupta*  
*Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS*

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This year is significant in the context of urbanisation in South Asia for two reasons. First, it marks 60 years since the countries of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka came into existence as modern nation states. Second, it is a watershed in human history when, for the first time, more than half of humanity, about 3.3 billion people, now live in towns and cities. In South Asia, home to over 1.6 billion people, a quarter of humanity, a third lives in urban areas. As the world becomes increasingly urban, the centre of gravity of this process is gradually moving to South Asia and China. According to the United Nations' projections, within seven years time, that is, by 2015, South Asia will account for five of the world's 12 biggest urban agglomerations (cities with more than 15 million people), namely, Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Dhaka and Karachi. Further, all but two of these 12 mega cities (Tokyo and New York-Newark) will be located in developing countries. In all, by 2015, over 540 million South Asians will live in towns and cities and, by the year 2030, this figure will cross 813 million. These are colossal numbers by any yardstick. To put these numbers in perspective, global population is projected at 8.2 billion in 2030 of which 4.9 billion will be urban dwellers. And 3.9 billion will live in less developed regions. In other words, by the year 2030, one in five urban dwellers will be a South Asian. This broad brush picture, of course, conceals marked differences in the process and nature of urbanisation within South Asia. To begin with, the levels of urbanisation vary significantly across countries. While Pakistan is the most urbanised country in the region at 36 percent, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal are among the least urbanised (12, 15 and 17 percent respectively). It is interesting to note, in particular, the low level of urbanisation in Sri Lanka, given its relatively high per capita income and human development report scores vis-à-vis the other countries in South Asia.

South Asia is also witnessing economic growth and transformation. In addition to the well known Indian growth story, despite serious internal and external problems, the other major South Asian economies, namely, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, have averaged respectable growth rates of about six percent annually over the last five years. Towns and cities in South Asia are driving this growth. Throughout the region, growth is taking place in sectors such as manufacturing, information technology, high-end service industries, trade, retail, and banking, insurance and finance, all of which are urban-centric. By the year 2011, the urban share in India's national income is expected to go up to 65 percent from slightly over 50 percent at present, even though only about 30 percent of the population will be urban by then. In

Pakistan and Bangladesh, the hypertrophic cities of Karachi and Dhaka dominate the demographic and economic landscape – one in ten Bangladeshis and one in twelve Pakistanis live in Dhaka and Karachi respectively. The mega-city of Karachi, for instance, not only accounts for a twelfth of the population of the country's 160 million people but also generates 60-70 percent of national revenue and over 40 percent of the value added in manufacturing.

While towns and cities are "engines of growth" for the rapidly growing economies of South Asia, unplanned and unmanaged urbanisation poses a serious threat to the very same growth. All urban areas in the region, big and small, face similar challenges of providing good governance, livelihood opportunities, adequate housing, water, sanitation, transport and other amenities to their residents. Thus, unless South Asia can make its towns and cities liveable where its citizens can pursue economic progress, the region will not be able to sustain and accelerate its growth trajectory. This is a key challenge confronting South Asia since sustaining and, indeed, accelerating economic growth is crucial to lift millions of South Asians out of poverty. In India, for instance, despite recent economic growth, two-thirds of the population still lives on US\$2 a day or less. Urban areas in South Asia themselves present a picture of stark contrast – incredible wealth and consumerism juxtaposed with abject poverty and squalor. While average incomes are relatively high in towns and cities, these averages conceal wide disparities in income. In India alone, urban poor account for at least a third of the urban population, if not more. Given a total urban population of over 300 million, this translates into a staggering 100 million or more destitute people in India's towns and cities, living in slums, shanties and sleeping on the streets.

Two misperceptions about urbanisation in South Asia are that it is largely caused by unchecked rural-urban migration and that some cities are 'too big' or of unmanageable size. The corollary to these widely-held views is that city managers in South Asia are, to an extent, helpless in improving conditions. A closer look at the data, however, reveals that city growth in South Asia is not mainly due to migration. Given the overall higher population growth rates, cities are experiencing high natural growth rates even without significant migration. In fact, research by the United Nations Population Division shows that, for developing countries as a whole (except China), about 60 percent of the urban growth rate is attributable to natural growth and the remaining 40 percent is due to migration and spatial expansion. Using census data for India for 1961-2001, Indian experts arrive at a very similar figure, namely, urban natural growth accounted for 60 percent of the total increase in urban population.

With regard to city size, it has been argued cities may experience very high rates of population growth and an inability to expand infrastructure fast enough to avoid problems. This begs the question of optimal city size and the pros and cons of having large cities. Urban experts often refer to 'agglomeration economies', namely, the advantages of specialisation and trade and exchange in goods and ideas that cities facilitate. But it may also be the case that beyond a certain size, diseconomies or negative externalities of too many people crowded together may set in, often referred to as 'congestion costs.' In this context, a concept often used is 'primacy' which refers to a country's largest one or two cities being abnormally large relative to the country's next largest cities. In South Asia, it has been estimated that Dhaka and Karachi are primate cities. As stated earlier, these two cities dominate the economic and urban demographic landscape of their respective countries. This is also true of Kathmandu vis-à-vis Nepal. Given the huge population of India, a hypertrophic or primate city has not emerged per se. Having said that, the megalopolises of Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata are huge by any standard. But recent research suggests that the hypertrophic nature of some South Asian cities may be due to inherent scale economies (the agglomeration economies mentioned above) and not due to deliberate policies such as urban bias. In other words, it does not appear that urban concentration is excessive at the moment in South Asia.

Whatever the merits of the argument, it cannot be disputed that the urban areas of South Asia need to be better managed. In fact, there is growing consensus that urban problems in South Asia are more of weak governance than rural-urban migration, over-urbanisation and hypertrophic growth. At best, these may be viewed as exacerbating



factors. The first and essential step towards better governance is to make urban local governments in South Asia truly representative and accountable to the people. In all major countries in the region, decentralisation of functions and responsibilities has happened more on paper than in reality. Throughout the region, urban residents do not have much say on issues that impinge on their daily life such as the provision of water supply, sanitation, garbage, streetlights, schools, health clinics and local libraries, among others.

At the same time, greater decentralisation of government functions has to be accompanied by concomitant fiscal devolution as well as greater capacity of urban local governments to raise revenues on their own. Indeed, one of the guiding principles of decentralisation requires the devolution of financial powers to follow functional devolution. In other words, the extent of autonomy depends on the extent to which local bodies can raise revenues independently and also allocate resources for providing local public goods. Most urban areas in South Asia come up short on this yardstick. Not only are they heavily dependent on higher levels of the government for grants but the general state of urban finances is precarious. To rectify this, in addition to fiscal devolution, cities and towns also need to raise greater revenue from property taxes and recover costs of providing services on lines of 'user pays' principle (with safeguards for urban poor).

While this is not an exhaustive list of actions, it does suggest some key areas where attention needs to be focused urgently. In conclusion, urban problems in South Asia are those of poor governance, a missing triad of Fs – functionaries, functions and funds. Addressing these is of vital importance to sustain and accelerate growth in the region. ■



# Snippets on South Asia

*Mr Malminderjit Singh  
Research Associate, ISAS*

## Sri Lanka – Loss of Credibility

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has yet again showed its strength and resistance against President Mahindra Rajapakse's government in Sri Lanka. On 27 April 2008, the LTTE carried out its second air raid as its light aircraft bombed military positions in the northern part of the country. Executed 13 months after the rebels' first air raid, this attack caused greater harm to the military's credibility than actual physical damage.

This loss of reliability in the Sri Lankan military is due to several factors. Firstly, the inability of the military to control the LTTE's diversity in threats has questioned its ineffectiveness to curb the LTTE's growth. The Sri Lankan air force has been using its sophisticated European and Israeli jets to bomb LTTE bases for almost a year now. Despite this, the LTTE's latest attack proves that any claims the government has made earlier in destroying the guerilla bases are dubious. Further, the state has been blindly defending the military position in public, which has done little to improve its reputation. In the massive battle at Muhamalai, south of the Jaffna Peninsular, on 21 April 2008, the Tamil separatists killed dozens of soldiers. Regardless of this, Army Chief Sarath Fonseka has denied that this campaign was a tactical disaster for the Sri Lankan armed forces. Highlighting that

the military also inflicted severe damages on the LTTE, he asserted that the state, thus, possessed the capabilities of gaining control of the north.

This military failure at Muhamalai has raised questions about the government's repeated claims of resounding victories over the LTTE. Even the media has now begun to rely more on the rebels' assessments of battles fought with the military than simply believing the latter. If the military claims of killed rebels were to be summed up, this would exceed the total size of the LTTE, which the government estimated at 3,000 men at the start of 2008. To make it worse, public confidence in the military has been weakened due to the ability of the rebels to carry out attacks all over the country and through various means. A day before the air attacks, the Tigers also managed to carry out a bomb attack on a bus in Colombo that took 26 lives. The Sri Lankan government and military must stop creating artificial impressions of its force over the LTTE as these false expectations lead to the public being caught off-guard by the LTTE attacks. In doing so, the rebels achieve their objectives of raising the plateau of terror within the people of Sri Lanka. This loss of confidence severely impacts the stability of the country and, hence, needs to be reversed.

## Bangladesh – Road to Democracy

On 12 May 2008, Bangladesh's Chief Adviser, Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, announced the lifting of restrictions on domestic politics across the country while declaring that national elections will be held in December this year. The Election Commission would announce the exact date of these elections later in the year. The head of the caretaker government, Dr Fakhruddin, explained that the government would suspend or relax relevant clauses of the emergency power act and its rules and regulations in an appropriate time. This would be done in a manner that is consistent with the requirements to hold a peaceful election process. Following this, the Home Ministry sent out a circular stating that the government has relaxed the ban on meetings and gatherings by any political parties, individuals or organisations under certain conditions.

In addition to these changes, the Chief Adviser also unveiled plans to draft a National Charter before the elections. Drawing

its inputs from consensus, Dr Fakhruddin explained that this would help bring in key qualitative changes to the government. These developments came a day after detained Awami League president, Mr Sheikh Hasina, had asked her party leaders to launch a mass movement to drive home her five-point demands, including an immediate announcement of national elections.

The Chief Adviser's announcement also coincided with the visit of Mr Richard A. Boucher, United States Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs. He was on a two-day visit to the country to discuss Bangladesh's efforts at democracy with its officials and to obtain their views on the latest political developments on the election roadmap. It seems that a concerted United States effort may help push Bangladesh closer to democracy.

## Maldives – Party Politics Turn Ugly

The struggle for political reforms in Maldives continues. As the country approaches its first multi-party elections, prospects of a joint opposition nominated candidate are still unclear. The National Unity Alliance of five opposition groups has yet to confirm its options for a joint alliance candidate during this campaign. Early reports indicate that its likely option might involve a candidate from one group teaming up with another as running mate.

This is exactly where the confusion lies, as party politics takes centre stage, throwing more names into the fray. Mr Mohamed Nasheed (Anni) has emerged as the contender for the Maldivian Democratic Party, the largest opposition party in Maldives, after he won his organisation's presidential primary elections with 68 percent of the votes. Shortly after his nomination, Anni publicly declared he was seeking to become the running mate of independent candidate, Dr Hassan Saeed, who is running under the New Maldives banner. In his statement, Anni admitted that he was also hoping to gain the support of another opposition group, the Adhaalath Party, to endorse his decision. Bringing the Adhaalath Party to his side would be strategically beneficial to him as the party claims to command the support of 15,000 Maldivians. However, the Islamic Democratic Party (IDP), with its own presidential hopeful, Mr Umar

Naseer, has invited the Adhaalath Party to produce a running mate for his campaign. Although the Adhaalath Party has conceded that it would rather support another party's candidate than field its own, it is still undecided on its endorsement choice.

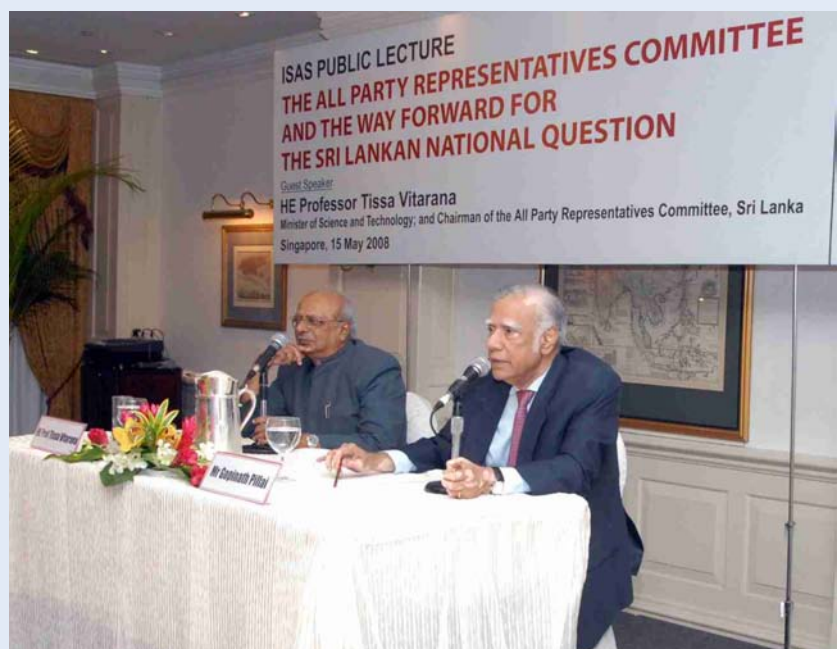
On the other hand, the IDP has recently been highly critical of Dr Saeed because of his book, 'Freedom of Religion, Apostasy and Islam'. Accusing the book of violating the tenets of Islam, the IDP asserted that it would never support Dr Saeed's candidacy due to this reason. Should the Alliance not endorse Dr Saeed as a candidate, Anni could possibly team up with Finance Minister Gasim Ibrahim, currently a vice-president of the ruling Dhivehi Raiyyithunge Party. Although not from within the Alliance, Gasim has the support of many Alliance parties, including the IDP, and, thus, would be a safe bet.

Regardless of whatever the outcome of the candidate options turns out to be, it is ironic that the much sought after multi-party elections has brought out the ugly face of party rivalry among the opposition in Maldives. In fact, a multi-candidate system will only dilute the collective power of the opposition and give incumbent President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom a better opportunity of retaining his position at the helm.

## Public Lecture on Sri Lanka's National Question

The Institute of South Asian Studies organised a public lecture on "The All Party Representatives Committee and the Way Forward for the Sri Lankan National Question" by HE Tissa Vitarana, Minister of Science and Technology; and Chairman, All Party Representatives Committee (APRC), Sri Lanka, on 15 May 2008.

Professor Vitarana outlined the historical background on the current issue of the national question in Sri Lanka. He also elaborated on the extensive efforts by the APRC in seeking workable resolutions to the Sri Lankan ethnic issue. He highlighted that, although there are challenges, continued constant dialogue among the APRC members is the best way to facilitate some answers for the Sri Lankan national question.





# ISAS New Research Staff



**Professor Bibek Debroy**  
Visiting Senior Research Fellow  
(May 2008 – April 2009)

Professor Bibek Debroy was educated in Presidency College, University of Calcutta, Kolkata (BA Economics, 1973), Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi (MA Economics, 1976) and Trinity College, University of Cambridge (MSc Economics, 1981).

He has held the following positions – Research Associate, Presidency College, Kolkata (1979-1983); Associate Professor, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, University of Poona, Pune (1983-87); and Professor, Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, Delhi (1987 to 1993). In 1993, he quit a teaching career to head a project on law reforms in India, started by the Indian Ministry of Finance, and the United Nations Development Program. This project was named “LARGE” and lasted from 1993 to 1998. In between, from 1994 to 1995, he was also a Consultant with the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance. In 1995, he was the Chief Consulting Economist with the National Council of Applied Economic Research in New Delhi. From 1993 to 1998, he was a Visiting Professor at the National Law School University of India in Bangalore. From 1997 to 2004, he was the Director of the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. From 2005 to 2006, he was the Secretary General of the Punjab, Haryana and Delhi Chamber of Commerce and Industry in New Delhi. From January 2007, he has been Professor at the International Management Institute, New Delhi and, from April 2007, Research Professor at Center for Policy Research in New Delhi.

Professor Debroy is a member of the Mont Pelerin Society and of the National Manufacturing Competitiveness Council. He has been a member of several government-appointed task forces, committees and commissions. He is also on the board of some Indian companies and on the governing boards of research institutes such as the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy. In 2006 and 2007, he was the rapporteur for one of the working groups in the United Nations Commission on Legal Empowerment for the Power. He has also undertaken consultancy work for several organisations. With Laveesh Bhandari as a co-author, he has published several inter-state comparisons, and the annual ranking he worked on for “India Today” is often quoted.

From 1995, Professor Debroy has been a regular columnist and consulting/contributing editor with various newspapers/magazines such as Business Standard, Financial Express and Telegraph. At present, he is a contributing editor with the Indian Express group (Indian Express and Financial Express).

He has a serious interest in Indology and has translated the Puranas, the Vedas and the Upanishads into English, apart from a book on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata (1989). His translation of the Gita was published by Penguin in 2006. Presently, he is engaged in a 10-volume unabridged English translation of the Mahabharata, to be also published by Penguin, beginning with the first volume in 2009. A book on the dog in Indian myths will be published by Penguin in August 2007.



**Dr Eswaran Sridharan**  
Visiting Senior Research Fellow  
(May – July 2008)

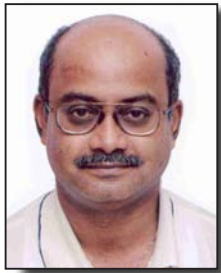
Dr Eswaran Sridharan is the Academic Director of the University of Pennsylvania Institute for the Advanced Study of India (UPIASI), (in New Delhi), from its inception in 1997. He was educated at St. Stephen’s College, Delhi University, and Jawaharlal Nehru University, and did his PhD in Political Science at the University of Pennsylvania, and was a Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, 1989-1997. He has held visiting appointments at the University of California, Berkeley, London School of Economics, Institute for Developing Economies, Tokyo, and the Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania.

He is a political scientist with research interests in the comparative politics and political economy of development, party systems and coalition politics, and international relations theory and conflict resolution in South Asia, in all of which areas he is currently directing projects for UPIASI. He is the author of *The Political Economy of Industrial Promotion: Indian, Brazilian and Korean Electronics in Comparative Perspective 1969-1994* (Praeger, 1996) and has recently co-edited (with Zoya Hasan and

# ISAS New Research Staff

R. Sudarshan), *India's Living Constitution: Ideas, Practices, Controversies* (Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002 and Anthem Press, London 2005); and (with Anthony D'Costa), *India in the Global Software Industry: Innovation, Firms Strategies and Development*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004 and New Delhi: Macmillan India, 2004) and *The India-Pakistan Nuclear Relationship: Theories of Deterrence and International Relations* (Routledge, New Delhi and Abingdon, UK, 2007); and (with Peter de Souza), *India's Political Parties* (Sage, New Delhi, 2006). He has published numerous journal articles and book chapters.

He is on the Editorial Advisory Board of *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*. He is also the South Asia Coordinator of the ASIA Fellows Program, and has consulted for the World Bank, the Ford Foundation and private companies.



**Dr Amitendu Palit**  
Visiting Research Fellow  
(May 2008 – April 2009)

Dr Amitendu Palit graduated with an Economics Degree from Presidency College, Calcutta University, followed by Masters from the same university. Thereafter, he joined the Indian Economic Service in 1992. After serving as a Research Officer at the Forward Markets Commission in the Ministry of Civil Supplies, and as Assistant Director at the Small Industries Services Institute, Kolkata, under the Ministry of Small-scale, Agro and Rural Industries, he joined the

Indian Ministry of Finance as Assistant Adviser in October 1996. In October 2003, he became Deputy Economic Adviser in the Economic Division of the Department of Economic Affairs in the Ministry of Finance.

During his decade long stint at the Ministry of Finance from October 1996 to May 2006, Dr Palit handled a wide range of subjects. He began by analysing industrial and infrastructure policies, particularly those relating to industrial growth and infrastructure reforms. Subsequently, he examined external sector issues. These included India's balance of payments, foreign exchange reserves, exchange rate management, foreign direct investment (FDI), short term capital flows and several operational issues pertaining to India's engagement with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other countries. During 2003-2005, he was the Ministry of Finance's coordinator for an Asian Development Bank-sponsored technical assistance on second generation reforms in the Indian economy. He was one of the main authors of the annual Pre-Budget Economic Survey brought out by the Ministry of Finance.

Dr Palit's main research interests are macroeconomic policies, industrial development, FDI and capital flows, small and medium enterprises and labour market outcomes. He did his PhD in Economics at the Centre for International Trade and Development under the School of International Studies at the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. His PhD thesis (2004) was *Foreign Direct Investment in India: An Economic Analysis of Determinants and Constraints*. In June 2006, he moved to the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER), Delhi – a leading economic policy think-tank in India – as a Visiting Fellow on study leave from the Ministry of Finance. At ICRIER, he has been working on comparative development experiences of India and China, issues pertaining to sustainability of India's growth, FDI in India, India's economic links with Latin America and Japan, and India's macroeconomic outlook and policies.

Dr Palit has figured on the Advisory Committee set up by the Planning Commission, India, on 'Inflow of Foreign Savings for the 11th Five Year Plan' and also on the Technical Committee of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on 'Growth of Micro and Small Enterprises in India'. He is a visiting faculty for leading business and management schools and research institutes of India including the Indian Institute for Foreign Trade, International Management Institute, Xaverian Labour Research Institute, Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy for Administration, Institute for Economic Growth and the Tata Energy Research Institute.

Dr Palit writes extensively for leading Indian newspapers and appears regularly as an expert on radio and television. He also has several academic publications to his credit. His first book (co-authored with Subhomoy Bhattacharjee) on *Special Economic Zones in India: Myths and Realities* (2008) has just been published. Dr Palit is also a major resource person for the ILO, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the United Nations Development Program.

# ISAS New Administrative Staff

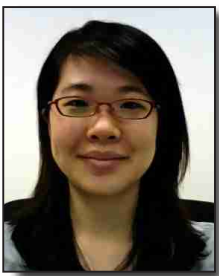


**Ms Vinitha Mohanaragam**  
Programme Officer

Ms Vinitha Mohanaragam joined the Institute as a Programme Officer in February 2008. Her key responsibility is finance management and she also assists in event organisation.

Vinitha's background and training is in financial accounting and administration. She previously worked in several organisations in the private sector. She holds a Bachelor of Business, specialising in Economics and Finance from RMIT University, Australia.

# ISAS Research Interns



**Melissa Chua**  
Research Intern

Melissa Chua is a second year student at Singapore Management University, pursuing a double degree in Economics and Social Science. Her academic interests include international political economy, globalisation and fiscal-related macroeconomic policies.

Melissa enjoys exploring both classical and contemporary literature. She also dabbles in graphic design, and has conceived the occasional event logo and publicity poster for school activities. Her travel ambitions include covering most of southern Europe before the age of 40, and revisiting Disneyland.

She hopes to pursue post-graduate studies in either Economics or Political Science. Her long term career goal is to play an active role in shaping public policy, either through employment in a government organisation or through academic research.



**Jamie Chen Siya**  
Research Intern

Jamie Chen Siya recently completed her second year at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) where she is pursuing a double major in Sociology and Communication Studies. Prior to entering university, Jamie completed a Diploma in Mass Communication at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

Jamie is a Student Ambassador for the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at NTU. Aside from school commitments, she is an active member of Singaporean feminist advocacy group - the Association for Women for Action and Research. She is also currently serving as the Assistant Honorary Secretary on the Executive Committee. In the last three years, Jamie has been a freelance journalist for TODAY. As a young lady, Jamie firmly believes that there can be more room for humanity in this world if there is greater respect for and acceptance of individual uniqueness.



**Cheah Yik Jin Farah Adam**  
Research Intern

Cheah Yik Jin Farah Adam is currently pursuing her Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) at the National University of Singapore, majoring in Political Science. She is also doing a minor in Religious Studies. Her research interests include failed states, minority rights, religious and social movements and the politics of communication. In the course of pursuing her major and minor, Farah has developed an affinity for political anthropology and local politics.

# ISAS Research Interns

Farah has been a resident assistant for five semesters now. She enjoys organising activities for her residents and helping fellow students through campus life. Away from school life, Farah enjoys the outdoors and rock-climbing. She is a lead instructor with Climb Asia Pte Ltd.

Farah shares a keen interest in research work. She hopes to work on image construction and media representation of Islam and reflect on its impacts on Singapore's domestic policy.



**Yvonne Yap**  
Research Intern

Yvonne Yap is currently a second year student at the University of California, Berkeley, majoring in Development Studies and Economics. She is interested in the issue of poverty alleviation, which explains why she travels extensively to developing countries, such as China, India and Indonesia to gain hands-on experience in the field of healthcare and education. These experiences have served as a springboard to further her interest, making her realise that there is so much more to learn from the region of South Asia alone.

She intends to work in the field of development or journalism for a few years after she graduates. This would give her more experience in every field before she decides on the field for her graduate studies. She will possibly focus on journalism or development, specifically on healthcare, education and microfinance.

Yvonne is active in community service. She volunteers regularly at the mentoring centre in Oakland, California, and works in the psychology laboratory as a research intern. She has also worked as a relief teacher with the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore. In addition, she is an avid traveller who regards it as a way to broaden her knowledge.

## Public Lecture by RBI Governor

The Institute of South Asian Studies organised a public lecture on “The Indian Economy: Prospects for Growth with Stability” by Dr Y. V. Reddy, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, on 20 May 2008. Mr Heng Swee Keat, Managing Director, Monetary Authority of Singapore, chaired the lecture.

The focus of Dr Reddy’s lecture was on the short-term and medium-term prospects of the Indian economy. He discussed the factors that were favourable to India’s continued economic growth, such as its innovative entrepreneur class, existing favourable savings and investment balance, a favourable demography and a huge pool of English-speaking people.

Dr Reddy also highlighted several challenges, including the shifts in the global economy. He also emphasised that democratic system stability and institution development are crucial to support the growth. He concluded that the Indian economy is largely driven by the dynamics of domestic demand but, at the same time, a favourable outlook of the global economy is equally important to achieve the country’s medium-term growth objectives.

The lecture attracted more than 120 people from the financial institutions, the academia and research institutes, the government, foreign missions, the media and the general public.



## Conference on 60 Years of Indian Independence

More than 100 participants attended the conference on “The Indian State: 60 Years On” in Singapore on 19 and 20 May 2008. The event was jointly organised by the Institute of South Asian Studies, the South Asian Studies Programme at the National University of Singapore, and the India Studies Programme of Indiana University, Bloomington, United States.

Dr Ramachandra Guha, a renowned Indian historian, delivered the keynote address for the conference. The speakers at the event included academics, researchers and media representatives from Singapore, India, Germany and the United States.

The conference focused on the evolution of the political institutions in post-independent India. More specifically, it examined the state of India's judiciary, legislative process, executive branch, armed forces, police and paramilitary forces, economic policies and mass media.



## International Conference on India and China

The Institute of South Asian Studies, the East Asian Institute (EAI), the Centre for Policy Research, India, and the South Asia Studies Programme at the Johns Hopkins University, United States, organised the international conference on “China-India: Economic and Social Development” in Singapore on 17 and 18 March 2008.

In his keynote address, Professor Wang Gungwu, Chairman of EAI, analysed China-India relations from a historical perspective. In spite of the similar Asian invasions encountered by both countries, the British rule in India strengthened the latter's institutional architecture. The two Asian giants have embarked on different trajectories in the globalisation era, thus leading to complexities in their relationship. The differences in their policies in Africa, the private sector-led development initiatives in India, as compared to government efforts in China, are few of the many factors that enhance this complexity.

The plenary sessions focused on economic developments, the education and social landscapes, law and environment, and governance and restructuring. The event was represented by academics, think-tanks and the diplomatic community from the United States, India, Singapore and China.

# ISAS Recent Publications

## ISAS Briefs

“Analysing India’s Credit Policy: Keeping an Eye on Inflation and the Elections”, Dr S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 4 February 2008.

“Forthcoming Pakistan Elections: A Profile on Pro-Musharraf Political Parties”, Professor Ishtiaq Ahmed, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 5 February 2008.

“Urban Transport in India: The ‘Nano’ Effect”, Dr Shreekanth Gupta, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 5 February 2008.

“Urban Transport in India: Beyond the ‘Nano’”, Dr Shreekanth Gupta, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 6 February 2008.

“Economic Slowdown in the United States: Importance of Domestic Market Leverage in South Asia”, Dr K. V. Ramaswamy, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 13 February 2008.

“Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Arunachal Pradesh: Buttressing the Claims”, Professor S. D. Muni, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 13 February 2008.

“Russian Premier Viktor Zubkov in India: Reinvigorating Relations”, Professor S. D. Muni, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 18 February 2008.

“The Pakistan Elections: A Political Analysis”, Professor Ishtiaq Ahmed, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 22 February 2008.

“Developing India-Malaysia Relations – Managing Issues of the Diaspora”, Mr Malminderjit Singh, Research Associate, ISAS, 27 February 2008.

“Nepal: Political Uncertainties and Economic Challenges”, Mr Malminderjit Singh, Research Associate, ISAS, 29 February 2008.

“India’s Economic Survey 2007-08: Impressive Growth and a Promising Future”, Dr K. V. Ramaswamy, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 29 February 2008.

“The Indian Budget 2008-09: An Assessment”, Dr S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 3 March 2008.

“The Third Tibetan Uprising: India’s Response”, Professor S. D. Muni, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 24 March 2008.

“Yousaf Raza Gilani: Pakistan’s New Prime Minister”, Professor Ishtiaq Ahmed, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 25 March 2008.

“Post-election Pakistan: Is there Hope or Despair for the People?”, Mr Iftikhar Lodhi, Research Associate, ISAS, 27 March 2008.

“Bhutan: Marching Towards Democracy”, Professor S. D. Muni, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 3 April 2008.

“Nepal Constituent Assembly Elections: The Dawn of a New Era?”, Mr Nishchal N. Pandey, Honorary Fellow and Consultant, ISAS, 18 April 2008.

“India’s Annual Policy Statement for FY2008-09: Achieving a ‘Neither Tight, Nor Liberal’ Monetary Policy”, Dr Amitendu Palit, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 7 May 2008.

“The Unravelling of Coalition Politics in Pakistan,” Dr Rajshree Jetly, Research Fellow, ISAS, 16 May 2008.

“India-Pakistan Composite Dialogue: Towards A “Grand Reconciliation”?”, Professor S. D. Muni, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 26 May 2008.

“Indian Management Education: Regulatory Structure is still Confused”, Professor Bibek Debroy, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 27 May 2008.

## ISAS Insights

“South Asia’s Inflation Challenges”, Mr Mohammad Shahidul Islam, Research Associate, ISAS, 28 March 2008.

“The Pakistan Federal Cabinet: More of the Same or Something New?”, Professor Ishtiaq Ahmed, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 11 April 2008.

# ISAS Recent Publications

“India towards a Knowledge Superpower? – A View from Outside”, Mr Gopinath Pillai, Chairman, ISAS, 24 April 2008.

“Development Trends in Selected Indian States – Issues of Governance and Management”, Dr S. Narayan, Head of Research and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 28 April 2008.

“Of Agflation and Agriculture: Time to fix the Structural Problems”, Mr Mohammad Shahidul Islam, Research Associate, ISAS, 5 May 2008.

“Higher Education in India – Ducking the Answers”, Professor Bibek Debroy, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 16 May 2008.

## ISAS Working Papers

“The Geopolitics of Energy Security and Implications for South and Southeast Asia”, Mr Rajiv Sikri, Consultant, ISAS, and Former Secretary (East), Ministry of External Affairs, India, 11 February 2008.

“Do Foreign Direct Investment Inflows Benefit the Major Sectors in India?”, Dr Maathai K. Mathiyazhagan, Research Fellow, ISAS, and Dr Dukhabandhu Sahoo, Lecturer, Department of Economics, Assam University, India, 18 February 2008.

“Commodity Boom and Inflation Challenges for Bangladesh”, Mr Mohammad Shahidul Islam, Research Associate, ISAS, 6 March 2008.

“The Challenges of Institutionalising Democracy in Bangladesh”, Professor Rounaq Jahan, Senior Research Scholar, Southern Asian Institute, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University, 6 March 2008.

“From Condemnation to Strategic Partnership: Japan’s Changing View of India (1998-2007)”, Professor Purnendra Jain, Head of the Centre for Asian Studies, University of Adelaide, Australia, 10 March 2008.

“Levels and Composition of Public Social and Economic Expenditures in India, 1950-51 to 2005-06”, Dr R. Ramakumar, Assistant Professor at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India, 4 May 2008.

“Trade, Restructuring and Labour: A Study of the Textile and Apparel Industry in India”, Dr K. V. Ramaswamy, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 8 May 2008.

“Financing Rural Renewable Energy: A Comparison between China and India”, Dr Huang Liming, Visiting Research Fellow, ISAS, 23 May 2008.

“India’s Attempts at Regional Integration with South Asia and East Asia”, Professor Bibek Debroy, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, 26 May 2008.

## Workshop on Inter-Regional Relations

The Institute of South Asian Studies will organise a workshop on “Inter-Regional Relations: South Asia and Southeast Asia” on 9 September 2008.

South Asia’s interactions with its neighbouring region have expanded considerably in the last few years. This is especially true of countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The workshop is inspired by growing interactions between the two regions and it seeks to understand the nature, course and consequences of this inter regional relationship. Its focus is on politico-diplomatic, security, economic and cultural ties.

The workshop will feature speakers from Singapore and South Asia and will examine India’s multi-faceted ties with Southeast Asia; the evolving relationship between Pakistan and Southeast Asia; developments in Bangladesh Southeast Asia relations; and the push-pull factors in Sri Lanka’s relations with Southeast Asia.

Please look out for details on the workshop on ISAS’ website at [www.isas.nus.edu.sg](http://www.isas.nus.edu.sg).

# ISAS Recent Events

Seminar by Professor C. Raja Mohan, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University; Dr Chen Gang, Research Fellow, East Asian Institute; and Professor Stephen Cohen, Visiting Professor, Centre on Asia & Globalisation, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS, “*A New Era in India-China Ties - Significance of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s Visit to China*”, 4 February 2008.

Seminar by Dr S. Narayan, Head of Research, and Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, “*U.S. Economic Slowdown - How Vulnerable is India?*”, 15 February 2008.

Closed Door Session by Dr Shashi Tharoor, Chairman of Afras Ventures, and Former Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information at the United Nations, “*The United Nations’ Reforms and India’s Seat in the United Nations Security Council*”, 27 February 2008.

Roundtable Discussion with HE Mr Sajjad Ashraf, High Commissioner, Pakistan High Commission in Singapore; Professor Ishtiaq Ahmed, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS; Dr Rajshree Jetly, Research Fellow, ISAS; and Mr Iftikhar A. Lodhi, Research Associate, ISAS, “*The Political and Economic Implications of the 18 February 2008 Pakistan Elections*”, 5 March 2008.

Seminar by Professor S. D. Muni, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS; and Dr Shreekanth Gupta, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, “*Sri Lanka’s Ethnic Conflict: The Political and Economic Implications*”, 11 March 2008.

ISAS and Network India (IE Singapore) Seminar on “*Indian Budget 2008*”, 13 March 2008.

International Conference on “*China and India: Economic and Social Development*”, 17-18 March 2008. Jointly organised by ISAS, East Asian Institute; the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi; and the South Asia Studies, The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, John Hopkins University, United States.

Public Lecture by Mr Gurcharan Das, Management Consultant and Writer, “*How Will High Economic Growth Change India’s Society*”, 24 March 2008.

Seminar by Dr Gurpreet Singh Bhatia, Fellow, Asia Competitiveness Institute, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS, “*On Productivity and Competition: An Asian Perspective*”, 10 April 2008.

Roundtable Discussion with Dr K. Subrahmanyam, Strategic Analyst, Diplomat, Journalist, and Former Civil Servant, India, “*India’s Foreign Policy Pre-Occupations With Its Major Neighbours, Including China*”, 11 April 2008.

ISAS and East Asian Institute Seminar by Dr Huang Jing, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, East Asian Institute and Professor S. D. Muni, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, ISAS, “*Unrest in Tibet - Implications for China and India*” on 16 April 2008.

First India-Singapore Strategic Dialogue, 5-7 May 2008. Jointly coordinated by ISAS and the Confederation of Indian Industry.

ISAS and Singapore Academy of Law Seminar on “*Managing Cross-Border Transactions and Dispute Resolution for South Asian Firms*”, 7 May 2008.

Seminar by Mr Nishchal N. Pandey, Honorary Fellow and Consultant, ISAS, “*From Rebels to Rulers: The Triumph of the Maoists in Nepal*”, 14 May 2008.

Public Lecture by HE Professor Tissa Vitarana, Minister of Science and Technology; and Chairman of the All Party Representatives Committee, Sri Lanka, “*The All Party Representatives Committee And The Way Forward For The Sri Lankan National Question*”, 15 May 2008.

Conference on “*The Indian State – 60 Years On*”, 19 – 20 May 2008. Jointly organised by ISAS, the South Asian Studies Programme, NUS, and the India Studies Programme, Indiana University, Bloomington, United States.

Public Lecture by Dr Y. V. Reddy, Governor, Reserve Bank of India, “*The Indian Economy: Prospects for Growth with Stability*”, 20 May 2008.