

**For Immediate Release**

## **Celebrating South Asia**

**Singapore, 7 July 2011 - The South Asian Diaspora Convention (SADC) brings together the diaspora of the region, other Asian businesses, Singaporean agencies and renowned scholars for forging new partnerships.**

SADC provides a unique platform to the South Asian diaspora for connecting to itself and engaging diverse Asian businesses. Regional integration is vital for South Asia's future growth and the diaspora can be of great help in pulling regional economies closer.

Mr Shahid Javed Burki, former Finance Minister, Pakistan and former Vice-President, World Bank, and a speaker at SADC, elaborates: 'The 50 million strong South Asian diaspora scattered over different continents can help South Asian economies overcome burdens of history and integrate closely. Most of the diaspora communities work well with each other outside boundaries of their homelands. They can employ those experiences to promote regional development in South Asia''.

The Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), an autonomous research institute under the National University of Singapore (NUS), is organising the SADC at the Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore on 21 and 22 July 2011. This milestone initiative has distinguished academics, business leaders, professionals, media personalities, foreign policy experts, government leaders and public policy practitioners, drawn from all over the world, including Singapore, as speakers. They will be addressing an audience comprising the South Asian diaspora, regional businesses, government agencies and entrepreneurs from Singapore, and also students, academics and professionals.

SADC will highlight South Asia's future economic prospects, the role of the diaspora in expanding the region's business links within Asia and how Singapore can be a springboard in bonding South Asia with South East and East Asia. Speakers at the event include Mr Richard Armitage, former Deputy Secretary of State, USA; Dr Han Seung Soo, former Prime Minister of Republic of Korea; Mr Piyush Gupta, Chief Executive Officer, DBS Group Holdings Ltd & DBS Bank Ltd; Dr Parag Khanna, Senior Research Fellow, New America Foundation, USA; Mr Ho Kwon Ping, Chairman, Singapore Management University and Executive Chairman, Banyan Tree Holdings Ltd; Mr Tarun Das, former Chief Mentor, Confederation of Indian Industry (India); Mr Minoru Makihara, Senior Corporate Advisor, Mitsubishi Corporation; Professor T N Srinivasan, Yong Pung How Chair Professor, Lee Kuan Yew

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School of Public Policy, NUS and Ms Chong Siak Ching, President and Chief Executive Officer, Ascendas Pte Ltd.

South Asia's economic upsurge in recent years makes it an exciting economic prospect. "The theme of the convention 'Linking the South Asian Diaspora' highlights the potential importance of the diaspora in this enterprise", says Ambassador Gopinath Pillai, Chairman of ISAS and Chairman of the SADC Organising Committee.

Dr S. Narayan, Head of Research ISAS, and former Economic Advisor to India's Prime Minister, points out that the SADC's timing is appropriate as most of the major South Asian economies are performing well.

Highlighting Singapore's potential dividends from building bridges between South Asia and the Asian region, Ambassador Pillai mentions the partnerships that Singapore-based entrepreneurs and Government-linked Companies (GLCs) can forge with a rapidly growing South Asia and its globally flourishing diaspora. Ambassador Pillai further points out that the SADC aims to facilitate interface between scholars and businesses for better understanding and appreciation of each other's insights and ideas and thereby encouraging greater regional integration.

Professor Tan Tai Yong, Director of ISAS, underscores Singapore's ideal positioning as a springboard for linking South Asia to Asia, not only because of its being a neutral and conducive territory for business negotiations, but also for being a great favourite of the South Asian diaspora, which has long and deep connections with Singapore. ISAS - a research institute working on contemporary South Asia - can aptly enable Singapore to function as a springboard in this respect.

"ISAS has world class researchers analysing South Asian affairs objectively. It is ideally suited to not only serve as an intellectual hub on South Asia, but also create greater awareness about the region, facilitate its understanding and contribute meaningfully to perspectives of policymakers and businesses", emphasised Professor Tan.

Inaugurated by Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Hsien Loong, the SADC will have President Mr S R Nathan as Guest-of-Honour, and Emeritus Senior Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong as Special Guest, at a gala dinner on the 21 July evening. A high point of the Convention is a dialogue with former Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew, the architect of modern Singapore, moderated by Professor Kishore Mahbubani.

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### **About the Institute of South Asian Studies**

The Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), established in July 2004, is an autonomous research institute within the National University of Singapore. ISAS is dedicated to the study of contemporary South Asia.

Researchers at the Institute conduct long-term and in-depth studies on social, political and economic trends and developments in South Asia and their impact beyond the immediate region. In addition, ISAS produces regular up-to-date and time-sensitive analyses of key issues and events in South Asia. ISAS disseminates the information to the academia, policymakers, business community and civil society. More details on ISAS can be found at [www.isas.nus.edu.sg](http://www.isas.nus.edu.sg).

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