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‘South Asian Link’ website launched

P. S. Suryanarayana

It will serve a 30 million-strong South Asian diaspora

India holds a lot of promise for savvy investors: Singapore Ministers

SINGAPORE: A website, designed as a global hub for the South Asian diaspora, including non-resident Indians and foreign nationals of Indian origin, was activated here on Wednesday.

Singapore President S.R. Nathan ceremonially struck a “dholak,” an Indian concert drum, three times to propel this “South Asian Link” into cyberspace. It was at Mr. Nathan’s initiative that the Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) here developed the website as the first move towards positioning Singapore as the launch-pad for establishing connectivity among the South Asians outside their ancestral or native lands.

ISAS chairman Gopinath Pillai and director Tan Tai Yong said a newsletter would be started in January. Mr. Pillai said the Link was being programmed to serve an estimated 30 million-strong South Asian diaspora. The project was a sequel to the publication in 2006 of an Encyclopaedia of Indian Diaspora under the auspices of the National University of Singapore.

‘India holds promise’

The launching of the Link followed a daylong international conference on “South Asia: Beyond the Global Financial Crisis.” Delivering the keynote address, Singapore’s Law Minister and Second Minister for Home Affairs K. Shanmugam said: “There is little doubt about India’s growth trajectory.... There are [however] threats to this picture ... a well-armed, well-trained Maoist insurgency in the northeast, which has spread to the east ... terrorist threats throughout the country. ... These and other threats could cloud the economic picture. But on the whole, the sense is that India will make steady progress. ... India holds a lot of promise for savvy investors.”

Chairman of South Asia Foundation-India Mani Shankar Aiyar said in the inaugural address that “the rise of naxal [Maoist] terrorism, amounting almost to insurgency, is an early warning of how rising socio-economic inequalities, discrimination and neglect could lead to extremist violence.”

“The politics of our poverty [in India] is reflected in the poverty of our politics,” Mr. Aiyar said. Illustrating his argument with the latest data, he said: “Not till we have a Ministry of Poverty

Alleviation, which incorporates a Department of Panchayat Raj, will we find our way to inclusive growth through inclusive governance.”

Coinciding with the launch of the Link, the ISAS brought out a book on last year’s conference on issues relating to the region.

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