

Singapore-India ties can be enhanced

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THERE is significant scope to further enhance Singapore-India economic ties as there are opportunities in India's industrial, infrastructure and skills development priorities, and the potential for greater regional economic integration.

Mr S. Iswaran, Minister, Prime Minister's Office, and Second Minister for Home Affairs and Trade and Industry said this at the second Singapore-India Business Dialogue organised by the Singapore Management University on May 21.

A platform to discuss how India and Singapore can engage each other more closely, this year's dialogue themed "The Changing Financial Landscapes in Singapore and India", attracted over 300 business leaders, finance professionals, academic experts and SMU students.

Mr Iswaran noted that with prime minister designate Narendra Modi and the BJP having got a resounding mandate from the people of India "expectations are running high that the newly-elected government will embark on positive policy changes and initiatives to move India decisively forward in its path of development and growth".

"The people and businesses anticipate more opportunities and a brighter future in India, as evident in the headlines and stock markets," he said.

As India reaps the demographic dividend of the projected increase of 300 million young workers by 2040, the best way for it would be to invest significantly in the education, capabilities and skills of young Indians.

Given Singapore's strong track record, it is an area where companies and industries from both countries can collaborate for mutual benefit, he added.

Similarly, Singapore, through the expertise of its companies and access to its capital markets, can also help India build adequate capacity in



port, power and road infrastructure to support its wider economic development, Mr Iswaran said.

SMU provost and deputy president (Academic Affairs) Professor Rajendra Srivastava said in his welcome address that the university under its India Initiatives was "working towards creating knowledge networks in partnership with leading educational institutions, and by working closely with business organisations and international conglomerates which offer us useful perspectives on how to operate successfully in both markets".

In his keynote address, Mr Prashant Saran, whole-time member, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), highlighted that the country's securities markets were in good shape.

"There is transparency and efficiency in the markets. The new Companies Act and the new SEBI norms in respect of corporate governance



In session... the panel in action (above) and Mr S. Iswaran giving his views at the dialogue (left). PHOTOS: SMU

have taken major initiatives towards establishment of a vibrant corporate sector.

"While the new rules have been framed after very detailed consultations, implementation has been designed to be non-disruptive," Mr Saran said.

In the second part of SMU's Singapore-India Business Dialogue senior panellists from the two countries focused on the implications for businessmen and investors with a new government having a strong development agenda taking charge in New Delhi.

Mr Manish Kejriwal, managing partner, Kedaara Capital Advisors LLP, said things were looking bright in India. Mr Modi as a strong business friendly leader would provide stability and consistency in policy leading to

7 to 8 per cent economic growth rate for the next five to seven years.

Tata Capital chief executive Soumen Mitra said the group's experience in Gujarat showed that Mr Modi was a capable administrator. He expects the spirit of entrepreneurship to be unleashed in the country and economic growth to accelerate going forward.

Mr Ronald Tan, director, listings, Singapore Exchange, said that policy clarity was needed from the new government in regulation, legal issues and taxation matters to help the capital markets to grow to provide funds to entrepreneurs and to fund infrastructure growth in India.

The panel discussion was moderated by Professor David Lee, director of the Sim Kee Boon Institute for Financial Economics at SMU.

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