

PROFESSOR J. MOHAN RAO
Director
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Professor J. Mohan Rao has dedicated himself for over three decades to the study of developing countries with a special focus on India. Following an MBA from IIM, Ahmedabad, and a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard University, Professor Rao built up internationally recognised expertise in development economics and institutional economics. He has published over 90 articles and monographs combining theoretical and empirical contributions in equal measure. India has been the mainspring of his theoretical inspirations and the mainstay of his empirically focused projects. He has actively engaged in both scholarly and policy debates affecting developing economies. While working in the United States, Professor Rao has maintained close contact with Indian institutions, visiting India every year. He has held several visiting positions including at the National Institute of Advanced Studies in Bangalore, the Indira Gandhi Institute for Development Research in Bombay and the University of Rome in Italy. He has been a frequent participant at conferences and given many seminars at academic and policy venues.

Professor Rao's work has been constantly guided by his strong desire to understand the challenges of achieving economic development with justice. Of late, he has also been concerned about the problems of achieving harmony both within India and in the region at large as a prerequisite for politically and environmentally sustainable economic growth. He was drawn to ISAS by its unique focus on the political economy of South Asia and its dedication to disseminate knowledge and understanding about the region in a manner that is useful to policy makers, the business community, academia and civil society.

The body of work on India that Professor Rao has built is unique in addressing both institutional and macroeconomic issues concerning both India's formal and unorganised sectors which hold 10 percent and 90 percent of the labour force respectively. This work has analysed the infrastructure constraint on India's development, the growth consequences of agriculture industry interactions, the causal links between economic demographic expansion and environmental problems, and the macroeconomic and social impact of globalisation and policy liberalisation. Professor Rao has authored a number of articles on the microeconomics of agrarian institutions and their consequences for productivity and distribution. Professor Rao has also examined in depth the trajectory of India's industrial performance on the basis of new measures of productivity growth. Buttressed by his findings from several field studies in the industrial centers of Ahmedabad and Bangalore, Professor Rao has written about the contours of industrial relations and their economic consequences. He also carried out a major study of the performance and prospects of micro-enterprises in the hinterland of Bangalore. Apart from his keen engagement with a wide range of contemporary issues, Professor Rao takes an abiding scholarly interest in the political economic history of India, having made theoretically informed contributions on the dynamics of the pre-colonial economy.

In his recent research, Professor Rao focuses on economic development in low-income countries in the wake of globalisation. This includes theoretical and cross-country investigations of fiscal and other macroeconomic correlates of liberalisation, and their consequences for growth and poverty. During 2000-2003, he was the lead consultant to the UNDP's multi-country Asia project on the possibility of 'pro-poor growth', and carried out empirical and policy application to the case of Indonesia. Professor Rao has also been a consultant to the UN Department of Economic Affairs, UNESCO, FAO, ILO and other international agencies, most recently to FAO in Dhaka.

Hailing from Bombay, Professor Rao has been struck over many years by the contrasts in the urban landscapes of Singapore and his beloved home city. He hopes to have the opportunity to explore the possibilities of replicating some of the lessons of the Singapore model in the cities of South Asia.