



## International Conference on Maritime Trade and Civilisational linkages among IOR countries Concluded Today

*Eight Ministries of India and representatives of 20 nations participated in the three days conference*  
Shri Manohar Parrikar, Hon'ble Defence Minister graced the event as the Chief Guest in the Valedictory Session  
Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Hon'ble Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, also addressed concluding session

**New Delhi/ Bhubneswar, 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 2015:** In a first of its kind confluence of Indian Ocean Rim countries in India, **The three days International Conference titled “India & the Indian Ocean: Renewing the Maritime Trade & Civilisational Linkages”**, held in Bhubneswar, India, on 20-22 March 2015, organized by the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS) jointly with Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) have successfully concluded with enlightening roadmap for development on vital aspects of “Trade, Maritime Security and Civilisational linkages” in the Indian Ocean region. Shri Manohar Parrikar, Hon'ble Defence Minister graced the event as the Chief Guest in the Valedictory Session on the concluding day.

With over 500 participants, 55 Speakers, 40 Organizations, 6 Ministers and delegates from 20 countries around the world (Australia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Thailand, Mauritius, Indonesia, Malaysia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Madagascar, Singapore, Yemen, Oman, Iran, UAE) attended the conference and discussed their experiences and practices. The high level of engagement among the participants and their experiences in international maritime trade practices and cultural legacy sharing has facilitated a valuable exchange of knowledge and experience. Furthermore, accessible keynote speakers from diverse learning traditions and approaches provided participants with an intellectually intimate conference ambiance, tempering this exchange.

**Addressing the valedictory session, Shri Manohar Parrikar, Hon'ble Minister of Defence, Govt. of India, proposed to form a stronger and transparent platform for IOR Region. While highlighting that since we are not powerful in the seas, Somali pirates are gradually shifting their base towards India, he said "Piracy is a big threat in this region. Navy of several states are engaging them. But off late Somali pirates are shifting their base towards India and are proving to be a considerable threat to international shipping for a long time now." Calling for greater deal of cooperation from neighboring countries, he further stated “the Ocean can be an enricher and also a destroyer hence we should also be prepared for the disaster and develop strong relationships and communication with neighboring countries to avoid and kind of disaster. He proposed to strengthen our power by forming a group and create a common platform for RIM region.”**



“This event has taken place at the right time and at the right place, right time because it signifies the importance of Indian ocean which was evident from PMs recent visit to 3 prominent IOR countries and place because government agenda of Look East and Act East”

**He further added** “This initiative and Bhubaneswar declaration should be treated as the beginning of IOR agenda. India has 47% of declared gas reserves, 50% of coastal traffic and 1/3 of cargo traffic. Be it from the history of Shiva ji or Chandragupta Maurya, importance of IOR can be learnt that India knew its importance but in between we lost the agenda and neighbouring countries went ahead of us. Undoubtedly India’s strength is in Non-violence and I believe that Non-violence can be dictated by the one who is strong while we respect everyone. Strong person can dictate peace. It should also be noted here that 95% of genetic material comes from fish. Also economy of ocean is not dependent on the surface of it but within it (other than fish), which we have not explored yet as it is the source of many natural resources and also non renewable power can be generated from it.” “He also highlighted that India has a Strong benefit “we have historical and cultural ties with IOR region and that makes Indian a focal point of IOR Region.”

**Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Hon’ble Minister of State (I/C) for Petroleum and Natural Gas also addressing valedictory session, said** “I am overwhelmed with the outcome of the conference in last three days. I have interacted with several delegates, guests and speakers of the various sessions on various technical and general issues related to the topic of the Conference. I have come to understand that the conference has helped in building in depth understanding of several issues and will strengthen the academic and research resources on Indian Ocean studies.”

**He further added** “On policy making aspect, I am happy that several senior Ministers and leaders from the Union Government and the State Government have actively participated in the conference and enriched us. I am sure they would have taken back the inputs from the other distinguished speakers which will be reflected in policy making on Indian Ocean in coming days”.

**Also stated** “During the inaugural session I had emphasized on the special relation people of Odisha have with the sea and also the special linkages that India has shared with Indian Ocean countries since historical periods. I also stressed on the importance of the Indian Ocean region in international trade and maritime activities. We need to put our acts together and the academics, think tanks, policy makers in both central and state governments should work together to reestablish the lost linkages”.

**He concluded by saying** “I will repeat that India is prepared to play a leading role in this context in the affairs of the Indian Ocean region for the larger benefit of all countries in our region”.



**Emphasizing on cooperation, peace, trust and transparency among IOR Region, H.E. Dr. S.C.**

**Jamir, Hon'ble Governor of Odisha delivered a Special Address,** stating "This conference couldn't have come at a better time than this one when it is being held at the close heels of the Hon'ble PM's recent visit to three countries in IOR region – Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka. Indian Ocean holds immense strategic value to a world ever dependent on hydrocarbon energy. The emergence of the global economy and the global market-place means that the Indian Ocean region manifests potential for growth in the regional trade and interaction in a wide range of sectors and promises economic self-sufficient and internal cohesion. Indian ocean which is the world's third largest ocean covering an estimated one-fifth of the earth's water surface, offers a plethora of opportunities. It is expected that the sea-lanes of the Indian ocean will become busier in the future as global maritime trade grows in size and importance".

**He further stated** "Increasing regional cooperation such as one initiated on the platform of this international conference will surely enable us to participate more actively and effectively in the overall development of blue economy." He also insisted "The need for creative thinking, new ideas and keenness to look at new ways of doing things while grounded on trust and cooperative approach". He concluded by saying "The Indian ocean is at the crest of this wave, and with India's leadership and commitment we can bring about a transformative change that we all believe in and aspire for. Also wish that this conference be seen as a step towards a great journey and a great mission".

**Commenting on the event, Mr. Arindam Mukherjee, Secretary, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS), said,**"Indian Ocean Rim Countries have strategic relevance as well as socio cultural similarities, which are key to fostering sustained economic as well as trade ties in the region and this conference has laid a foundation by setting-up a platform for exchange of ideas and therefore re-energize the concept of linkage in the backdrop of current geopolitical developments and alignments".

**He further added** "This conference has provided a valuable opportunity to study and analyze Indian Ocean from all the aspects and perspectives -historical, economical, geo political, cultural, energy security, religion, literature, trade, migration, diaspora, etc., which will provide a stepping stone to rejuvenate the deep ties that bind the regional nations".

**Speaking on the encouraging impact of the conference, he stated that** "The participation, reciprocation, attention, the involvement and concern I found from one to one talk with the delegates is amazing, really encouraging and with more such active interactions we can proceed for setting the policy on making any decision. Our work has just started, we have officially launched Indian Ocean Resource Centre for working extensively and on a regular basis, just to reach the goal."

**Over last three days, the conference witnessed premier dignitaries sharing their thoughts and vision for an inclusive growth of Maritime Trade across Indian Ocean RIM nations:**

**Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs, highlighted** "We look forward to building closer cooperation in the

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maritime domain, regularize bilateral maritime exercises and strengthen the dialogues between the navies and the Coast Guards with all littoral countries in the Indian Ocean Region. India is part of various multilateral institutions, which are actively debating maritime security issues in the Asia Pacific region”.

“We value our trilateral maritime security cooperation with Sri Lanka and Maldives. We are exploring possibilities of expanding it to include others in the Indian Ocean Region in particular Seychelles and Mauritius”.

**She further added,** “Today, the Indian Ocean carries one half of world’s container shipments, one-third of the bulk cargo traffic and two-thirds of the oil shipments, though three-fourths of this traffic goes to other regions of the world. 90% of our trade by volume and 90 % of our oil imports take place through sea. We have a long coastline of 7500 km, 1200 islands and a 2.4 million square kilometres of Exclusive Economic Zone.

**Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Hon’ble Minister of State (I/C) for Petroleum and Natural Gas said** “We Odias have special relationship with Ocean. In the past when Odisha was known as Kalinga, it was known as the major trading center on the coast of Indian Ocean. As a fellow Odia, it is my conviction to revitalize the economy of state”. He further added “To regain the glory of Indian Ocean, we need to develop modern ports and promote SMEs in the state.”

**Hon’ble Chief Minister of Odisha, Sh. Naveen Patnaik, Said** “Historically, India is known for its knowledge, wealth and culture. It was a vibrant maritime trading nation doing business with Mesopotamia, Ancient Arab countries, China and especially East Asian countries through multiple sea routes all along the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean, the name itself signifies the importance of India in ancient maritime world”.

He further added, “Our prominent maritime past has been authenticated by numerous and diverse excavated materials ranging from Kushan coins, Roman pottery fragments, Chinese ceramic shards and even the depiction of African giraffe in the timeless sculptures of the Sun temple of Konark. The Buddhist & Jain texts, Greek writings, Huen Tsang's accounts and Arab writers' accounts refer to Odisha's sea trade with outside world through a number of ports along the coast of Kalinga.

**He stated** “According to Alfred Thayer Mahan, an American Geo-strategist and Navy admiral, "who so ever controls the Indian Ocean in 21st Century, will control the destiny of the world.". Therefore, we must develop a comprehensive geo-strategic policy that promotes mutually beneficial engagements on an umbrella of issues relating to trade, culture, security and environment”.

While highlighting the need to build infrastructure to promote tourism in the country, **Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Hon’ble Minister of State (I/C) for Tourism and Culture, Govt. of India, said,** “IOR region is our prime focus as respected Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi ji, aims to strengthen relationship within IOR region. With an aim to achieve 1% of the global tourism, the Centre has taken giant strides in last one year. We have 7500Km of coastal belt and out of that around 485Km comes in Odisha, which has a huge potential to attract tourists from across the globe hence we are promoting it by initiating various programs around spiritual and cruise tourism. In the recent union budget also, we have rolled out very prominent schemes for promoting cruise and spiritual tourism, which has not been explored in the past. These initiatives will go long way in promoting tourism around costal belt of India.”

**Mr. Jean Francois Salles, from France, who is an archeologist by profession, said,** “A famous historian of France has said that history is the answer to questions that the present brings’. When you want to answer the present, you have to go back to history and I strongly believe that relationships can be revived as it has happened in the past.”

**He further added** that “This conference has turned out as a great learning since it has given us a unique opportunity to meet many people from the Indian ocean countries. Hoping that this conference will expedite the process and facilitate dialogues in the future”

Hoping from the conference to build cooperation among RIM nations, **Mr. Dennis Rumley, Professor of Indian Ocean Studies & Distinguished Research Fellow, Curtin University, Western Australia, Said,** “We need to look at security from the broader prospect of environmental, human, economic and energy etc. Need of the hour is to build greater awareness and interest to cooperate in sustainably harnessing the benefits for inclusive growth.”



Looking to explore India's maritime culture and history, **Mrs. Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive, South African Institute of International Affairs, said** "It becomes imperative to know and learn from experiences and look forward to continuously improve on the positive and negative aspects of connectivity among various regions"

**The conference also witnessed many historic events with launch of:**

- Release of Postal Stamp by Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs
- Launch of Logo of IORC by Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs
- Release of several books on south east Asia and historical linkages among IOR countries including a book by Arindam Mukherjee titled 'The Indian Ocean Civilisation'.

Alongside, an exhibition 'Indian Ocean - The Seafaring Legacy' was also organized that touched upon all the points of civilization linkages and marks the celebration of 1000 years of coronation of Rajendra Chola I.

The exhibition, showcased the vast heritage of the region, its inter-linkages, its synergic ideologies, cultural similarities and also displaying various symbols and remnants of the glorious past including Socotra, Terracotta art in Bengal, Boats of India, the text of Loan Agreement on Papyrus, Ramayana Tradition, Buddhism in South East Asian Countries, Bali - Land of Enchantment, Imprint of Indian Art in SEA, Deities & temples of Cambodia, Indian Linkages with Indonesia, Vietnam & other countries.

**The collaborating partners of the conference include** Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA); XP Division, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India; Department of International Relations & Co-operation, Republic of South Africa; Kenya National Chamber of Commerce & Industry; Odisha Institute of Maritime & South East Asian Studies and National Fisheries Development Board.

**About Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS)**

The Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS) is an organization promoting research and academic activities on various social and cultural issues. It has been working with academicians, students, researchers and activists on topics of historical and cultural interests. The objectives of the ISCS are to promote national and social integration as well as international understanding, preserve and arrange for documentation of national heritage including its intangible components, organize conferences, workshops, seminars, study groups to study public policies and their impact on society, grant fellowships for research and publish journals, books etc. for furtherance of the above objectives.

**About Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)**

Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a New Delhi based autonomous think-tank under the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, is an organization that specializes in policy research on international economic issues and development cooperation. RIS is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity building among developing countries on international economic issues. The focus of the work program of RIS is to promote South- South Cooperation and assist developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. RIS is engaged in the Track II process of several regional initiatives. RIS is providing analytical support to the Government of India in the negotiations for concluding comprehensive economic cooperation agreements with partner countries. Through its intensive network of policy think tanks, RIS seeks to strengthen policy coherence on international economic issues.

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