

Mahasagar

India & The Indian Ocean Renewing the Maritime Trade & Civilisational Linkages

Conference Newsletter

Friday, March 20, 2015



India and The Indian Ocean begins

The three-day conference on “India and The Indian Ocean: Renewing the Maritime Trade and Civilisational Linkages” will start from Friday. A review meeting was held to discuss the importance highlighting culture, economy and security as the three pillars of development.

Haraprasad Das, Chairman of the reception committee informed that this was an unprecedented event as eight central ministers would be part of the conference. He also spoke about the importance of Indian Ocean. “Controlling Indian ocean is equal to controlling seven seas of the world,” he opined. However, he admitted that Odisha’s culture of maritime trade is deteriorating. “Once Odisha had many sea and riverine ports, which do not exist today. The ancient powers couldn’t retain them. Odisha has a rich history of maritime trade, however, it has died down due to the end of non-functioning of sea and riverine ports”, he said.

He stated that China’s direct link to the South East Asian countries has hampered India’s ties with the region. However, this conference would give all the nations around the Indian Ocean a common platform, he added.

Mahesh Arora of Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) stated that this conference would help in forging a relation with the foreign nations and create a benchmark. It would create a connection between culture, security and economy, he stated.

“This event will introduce us to many new policies, which will help us to introspect and move forward,” he said.

He claimed that no other country has as many maritime rituals as India and talked about the vitality of Indian Ocean.

“Indian ocean is our lifeline and should be made a trouble free and peace zone. This zone has a problem of human trafficking

and arms smuggling. Countries have been adopting a collective approach to solve them. Marine life is also under threat, we would be devising strategies to tackle this issue and move forward,” he said.

Secretary of Indian Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS) Arindam Mukherjee would also be the curator of the exhibition on “Indian Ocean : The Seafaring Legacy”.

“The exhibition is trying to touch all the points of civilization linkages. And this time, to celebrate one thousand years of coronation of Rajendra Chola I, we would be releasing stamps based on Rajendra Chola and Indian Ocean,” he informed.

Speaking about the importance of the event, Rituraj Sinha, Secretary of the organising committee said, “This kind of conference which has many political

and geopolitical ramifications is being held for the first time in Bhubaneswar,” he said. Stating that Odisha has been at the frontier of maritime trade, Sinha added that supported by not only culture and tourism but by commerce, shipping and petroleum ministries too, “it is an important event and is essential for the larger development of the region.”

He welcomed people from all walks of life to visit the exhibition. He also said that this conference has put Odisha at the focus of the whole country. “This conference will project Odisha on the international platform,” he added.

Kishore Basa, Secretary of reception committee spoke about the importance of cultural exchange between countries around the Indian Ocean. “All countries should harbour a common feeling of belongingness as we share a common cultural heritage,” he stated.

India the most trusted nation in IOR region: Arindam Mukherjee

The eastern Indian city of Bhubaneswar is hosting the three-day confluence of Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) countries from March 20, 2015. The event is being held with support from eight important ministries of the Government of India, the confluence is seen as an event of huge strategic importance in view of the debate over the need of regional re-grouping and sub-grouping.

The confluence titled "India and the Indian Ocean" bears lot of hope for the organisers, supporters and the participating countries. Arindam Mukherjee, Secretary of the ISCS, talks about the need of such a confluence and its possible geo-political outcome.



Why the idea of organising this conference looked relevant to you?

Now, across the world, lots of groupings are taking place. You can see the groupings like SAARC, BIMs-TEC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation), where India has an important role. Indian Ocean Rim is another grouping comprising of three major regions like South East Asia, East Africa and the third one is Gulf. Strategically, these three regions are very important for us, from security angle, from oil security angle. And, in this region, the influence of China is gradually growing. So, India should, and has to, play a role in this region.

You are also aware that this is the only ocean that is named after a country, India. Though China has expressed its dissent over the nomenclature, Indian Ocean bears enormous strategic importance for India as well.

If you look at these three regions – South East Asia, East Africa and Gulf – together they have remarkable diaspora. Not today, but we have cultural as well as trade contacts with them since 6000-7000 years! With the activities came down we haven't given enough importance to these regions. But from strategic, diaspora wise and all other angles, this region is very important for India.

Keeping this in view, we thought we should work on the regional grouping. The present government also emphasises upon transformation of the "Look East Policy" into "Act East Policy," which is evident from its pro-active foreign policies. The recent visits by Prime Minister Narendra Modi stand as testimony to the government's interest to strengthen relationship with all IOR (Indian Ocean Rim) countries.

We thought, why the government only should work on this? If you look at the global scenario, think-tanks have important role in the policy making

mechanism of the developed nations. Because the government can't think of everything, every aspect, they need proper inputs. So, the idea of this conference as a mega event is mainly motivated by our desire to highlight the importance of the region to draw attention of the Indian government and to bring-forth India's pro-active role in this regard for the world to appreciate.

If you look at the regional scenario, you must realise that India has been the most trusted nation in the region because all other countries know that India never believes in expansionism. This fact is backed by the history itself. Also, India's pro-active role to strengthen regional cooperation would benefit all other countries by boosting businesses, trade activities, tourism etc.

On the other hand, China's growing influence has scared many of these countries. We believe, every other country in the region would support India's leadership if India takes a pro-active role.

And, to us, this is the time for that. So, we planned to organise this conference in Bhubaneswar.

You could have organised it in other cities, probably in any of the metro cities. But, why in Bhubaneswar of Odisha?

In the eastern region, Kolkata is already saturated. Vishakhapatnam in Andhra is already developed. So, in the eastern region, in my view, if there is a city where many more can be done, where there is scope for development is the city of Bhubaneswar in Odisha. Because we see it as an upcoming city of business activities controlling lots of ports and maritime linkages with South East Asia and other countries through Indian Ocean, we planned the event here, in Bhubaneswar.

In context of present geo-political situation in Asia, what political

possibility this particular conference bears?

China has declared a US\$20 billion project called marine silk route. It's through this project that China aspires to build ports and deploy naval ships in different countries. So, China is aggressively expanding its influence in this region.

Our institute believes in practical works than just theories. Before this project, I have visited some of the countries in the East Africa and South East Asian region. During the tour, I have realised the amount of trust those nations have on India. In fact, they all want India to take the leadership in the region.

How this conference is going to promote "Blue Economy" in the region?

Economy is one of the important parts of the conference. Expert economists from all IOR countries are coming to this conference. Our organising partner Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) works exclusively on economic development. This organisation has been working on the economy of IOR countries and, also, on blue economy. So, Economy is the focal point of this conference. Among the eight ministries of the Government of India, who are supporting this event, is the ministry of commerce and industries and the minister Nirmala Sitharaman is attending the valedictory session where she is going to deliver a speech as well. So, it indicates how much importance the conference gives to the economy of the whole region.

Usually such events are called track-II diplomacy...

No. This is a track 1.5 event, meaning not 1, nor even 2 but in between the both.

OK, then what kind of political outcomes you expect from this event?

You see, Indian Ocean Rim is now in

focus of the present government and the Prime Minister. The recent tour by the Indian Prime Minister is indicative of his interest in the region. He has also termed economy as the focal point in the region. It's but a fact that the government can't do everything alone. The think-tank groups must also join hands and by involvement of both much more can be achieved.

Do you think, this conference is going to facilitate dialogue between countries for resolution of disputes like India has with Sri Lanka over fishing in the sea and with Bangladesh over water?

You talk about Bangladesh. The Foreign Secretary of Bangladesh is visiting the conference and going to chair two sessions of it. A roundtable meeting of ambassadors of the IOR countries is in the agenda of the conference.

Such event, which has never happened before, is most probably going to impact the regional geo-politics.

Is this conference going to generate interest in other IOR countries to organise such events to facilitate convergence and dialogue between countries in the region?

As we found during our recce tour, most IOR countries appreciate such efforts and they also want more such conferences in different countries. We have already received two proposals to organise such events in Nairobi and Johannesburg. South African foreign department is interested to organise the next year's conference in Johannesburg. Kenya has also invited us to organise a conference there. So, with more such conferences held regularly in different parts of the region, we can say that a new beginning is taking place!

Can we say, this is what you hope from this conference?

Of course, you can!



Showcasing the legacy of seafaring

Showcasing thousands of years of maritime legacy of Indian Ocean Rim Countries, an exhibition called 'Indian Ocean: The Seafaring Legacy' is to be inaugurated Friday, March 20, 2015. The three-day long fair is scheduled to be inaugurated by Ashok Chandra Panda, Tourism and Culture Minister of Odisha. The exhibition aims at showcasing glimpses of not only how Indian coast looked like during the medieval era, but also its erstwhile links with the outside world. The collections are largely drawn from archives of the different countries and others.

"The vast ocean connecting and separating nations played an important role in shaping many countries cultures and ideologies through the movement of goods, people, ideas and religion vide trade, naval power, travel and scientific exploration across the sea. We are exhibiting a good number of panels confirming this," said Arindam Mukherjee, Secretary of ISCS and curator of the exhibition.

About 54 panels of pictures, photographs, maps and sketches on the vast heritage of

the region, its inter-linkages, its synergic ideologies and cultural similarities are on display. Apart from this various symbols and remnants of the glorious past including Socotra, called as the 'most alien-looking place on Earth,' terracotta art of West Bengal, varieties of boats of India, the text of Loan Agreement of Papyrus, influence of Ramayana in art, dance and puppetry of South East Asia are on display.

Elaborating on Socotra island, Mukherjee said the island has its name from Sanskrit expression 'DulpaSukhadara/Sukatara'.

A number of rock surfaces covered with brahmi inscriptions containing name of the persons have been found on the island. "Drawings of auspicious symbols such as Purnaghata, Trisula and Parasu have been found hinting at Shaiva affiliation of the painters. Pictures of boats are also found in Hoq cave."

The exhibition has imprints of Indian Art in South East Asia, prehistoric movement of plants and animals across Indian Ocean, Indian Linkages with Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and other countries, moulded Buddhist clay tablets from South

East Asian countries and deities and temples of Cambodia among other rare collections.

Informing about prehistoric movement of animals across Indian Ocean, Mukherjee highlighted that during his visit to Australia he found a free-ranging Australian dog, Dingo, travelled to the country some thousand years back. "Dingo is generally believed to have descended from semi-domesticated dogs from South East Asia, which returned to a wild lifestyle when introduced to Australia. They are very similar to the street dogs found in India," Mukherjee said.

Another interesting panel on display is maritime links of ancient Afghanistan and the Indian Ocean of the Kushan Empire. Also on display is the tradition of celestial navigation in Indian Ocean, the luxurious lifestyle of Roman women, Roman appetite for Indian luxury goods - ivory, pearls, spices, dyes and cotton. "Roman women looked upon the east as an abundant source of luxury items. They were very fond of cotton clothes made in India, thus the trade," informed Mukherjee. ■

Odisha Hopes



As the conference of the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) countries is being held in Bhubaneswar, city elites hope to see many social and scholastic amenities in the state in the coming days.

"The selection of Bhubaneswar as the venue for 'this international conference is an indication by itself that the organisers of the conference found the right kind of background to launch civilisational, cultural and development programmes based on Indian Ocean," says Dr. Haraprasad Das, an eminent litterateur and Chairman of the reception committee of 'India and The Indian Ocean' said.

Through this first of its kind event, Odisha is going to be a maritime trade hub, Das added.

"An event like this will help in promoting heritage tourism centre in the state to serve RIM countries," Das expressed his hope adding that "Moreover, we can think of having civilisational centre and centre for study of religions established in the state."

Das hopes for a search and rescue co-operation centre with disaster prediction architecture created on available infrastructure in Odisha.

Emphasising on initiating measures to address issues of social importance, Das said that centres for gender studies in consonance with IORA chapter of women's empowerment can be planned in the state.

"A hub for the network of identified universities for exchange of scholarship in maritime heritage and a maritime university would better serve the state," Das said.



Beyond Landmass: the maritime heritage of India

Dr. Benudhar Patra

Three-fourth of the earth's surface is covered with water; and India, being surrounded on the southwest, south and southeast respectively by the unfathomable water-mass of the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, has played an important role not only in the maritime history of India but also of the neighbouring countries like Sri Lanka, Indonesian islands, Myanmar, Cambodia, Philippines etc. She had brisk cultural and commercial contact with the ports and cities of ancient Mesopotamian civilization in the west, five thousand years ago.

The Harappan civilization, the so called first civilization of India had the first significant tidal dock at Lothal, now in Gujarat. The *Vedas*, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and a host of other ancient texts, the Buddhist and Jain literatures are replete with references to the maritime heritage of India. The archaeological excavations and explorations, discovery of numerous epigraphic and numismatic records along with art, architectural, sculptural and painting specimens also throw sufficient light on the rich maritime heritage of India. The folklores, rituals, customs, ceremonies and traditions are also not lagging behind in this connection.

Modern states of India like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal had enjoyed great maritime advantages due to their location on the sea coast.

The practices like *Khudurukuni osha* and *boitabandana utsava* in the Indian calendar month of Kartik, prevalent throughout the width and breadth of Odisha, contain living account of such activities. These are not merely local rituals but contain the reminiscences of the commencement and return voyage of the Odia mariners as it is proved that the *sadhabas* (rich merchants who constituted not a caste but a class) started their journey in the northeast monsoon that blows from the month of October to December and came back from the distant lands after bon voyage in the southwest monsoon which blows from June to September.

The Satavahana rulers of Andhra were great patrons of maritime trade, a fact substantiated by the circulation of a number of coins with ship motifs. The Cheras, Pandyas and the Pallava rulers of the south had great role so far as the maritime activities of early south India is concerned. The Cholas of the south India, however, proved to be the most dominating maritime power in the south who did not only convert the Bay of Bengal and the Indian ocean into a 'Chola Lake' but established Sri Vijaya empire in Indonesia besides conquering Sri Lanka. It is very interesting and pertinent to mention here that so significant was the role of Indian Ocean in the life of the Indians and so brisk was the involvement of Indian mariners in the maritime activities across the Indian Ocean that an ocean has been named as Indian Ocean after the name of India.

The Pala rulers of Bengal were great supporters of the maritime activities. The excavations at Chandraketugarh and at Tamralipti proved the maritime potential of West Bengal. It is said that the richness and prosperity of ancient India, more often referred to as 'golden sparrow' and



the 'land of milk and honey,' was due to its maritime trade and overseas colonies.

Ancient Odisha or Kalinga was ahead of many others in this regard too. Odisha was so famous in maritime activities that poet Kalidas in his *Raghuvamsha* has extolled the king of Kalinga as *Mahodadhipati* (lord of the ocean) and *Aryamanjushrimulakalpa*, a text of the 8th century CE, has referred to the modern Bay of Bengal as *Kalingasagara*. It is known from the Buddhist text *Mahavamsa* that Vijaya, the first king of Sri Lanka was sailed from the Bengal-Kalinga coast during the sixth century BCE.

The long coastline of ancient India was studded with a number of navigable ports and port-towns with sufficient hinterland such as Broach, Arikamedu, Pithunda, Kalingapatnam, Dosarene, Chelitalo-

India, with the passage of time along with maritime trade and cultural transmission spread to different countries of Asia, particularly to Sri Lanka, Java, Sumatra, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, China and Japan etc. Needless to mention here that, Fa Hien, Hiuen Tsang and Itsing, the three great Chinese Buddhist pilgrims came to India to satisfy their intellectual quest in Buddhism. Fa Hien came through land route and returned through sea route via Sri Lanka. While Hiuen Tsang came to and went back from India through land route, Itsing in the 7th century CE came to the Indian port Tamralipti and returned from India to Kedah through a high sea route across the Bay of Bengal.

The Indians were great adventurers in the trans-oceanic activities. Biswanath Kaviraj in his *Sahityadarpana* refers to the people

From the accounts of Fa Hien it is known that the merchant ship, in which Fa Hien was travelling, boarded 200 passengers along with other materials. It indicated that the ships were well-built and were strong enough to carry hundreds of passengers. The maritime trade of the ancient Indians was so intensive and vigorous that the merchants who went out for trade considered South East Asian countries as their second home. Sumatra and Burma (Myanmar) were so famous and popular among the Indian mariners that they referred to both as *Suvarnadvipa* and *suvarnabhumi* respectively. The Anand temple in Myanmar, the Angkor Wat in Cambodia and Borobudur monument in Java prominently reflect the architectural connection between India and the countries of South East Asia. The role of Indians in transforming the society, culture, polity of South East Asian countries was so dominating that most part of Asia and even beyond remained home to the Indian mariners.

Through the ages India has played a significant role in the maritime activities of the Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Ocean and India are not only closely connected but are complementary to each other. Oceans are natural boundaries of India and provide protection to it since time immemorial. Timely monsoon is possible in India because of the Indian Ocean and India is claimed to be an agrarian country because of the availability of the monsoon wind. Ocean is the life line of the Indians. Ocean is vital to India as is its land mass. The power, position and future prosperity of India and other coastal Asian nations depends on the security of the ocean property. Hence, it's time that due emphasis be given



Manikpatna, Khalkattapatna, Palur and Tamralipti etc. These ports are not only referred to in the Indian texts but also vividly referred to in the account of foreign travellers like the anonymous author of the *Periplus of the Erathraean Sea*, Ptolemy, Pliny, Fa Hien, Hiuen Tsang, Itsing etc.

Ptolemy, the Greek geographer refers to Palur as an international port and *Periplus* refers to Dosarene, which was famous for the production and export of best quality of ivory. a the sapling of the *Bodhi* tree carried by Asoka's son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitra, who sailed from the port of Tamralipti to Sri Lanka, is believed to be presently worshipped at Kandey in Sri Lanka. Buddhism, though originated in

of ancient Odisha as *Kalingah sahasikah*. In the days of yore when there was no mariners compass and the people were ignorant about the monsoon wind, and there were natural plights like cyclone, tornado and piratical activities in the midst of ocean, the people of ancient India dared to cross the ocean. In the course of their voyage they discovered sea routes, both coastal as well as overseas, to different countries of the south East Asia and the western countries as well. The coastal route was very popular those days though the knowledge of oversea route was too familiar to them. They constructed ships and big boats and plied to different countries.

on the protection, preservation and management of the oceans to find a niche in the horizon of the global economy and politics. Proper liaison between India and neighbouring Indian Ocean countries should be made so far as the interest of the ocean is concerned. Lectures, workshops, seminars and symposiums with wide participation of scholars from Indian Ocean Rim Countries would open up new opportunities for better understanding of the Ocean and discussions on the coastal as well as Ocean security.

Author teaches history at PG Department of History, Post Graduate Government College, Chandigarh



Bhubaneswar to link civilisations

While maritime trade history of Odisha is several thousand years old, the state was once an important hub for trade and commerce, which was linked through the sea route extending from Rome to China. Odisha reached its peak in overseas trade during Emperor Ashoka's rule. Ships from this state reached places in far off Indonesia, Sumatra, Burma and Java and not only helped in the expansion of trade but also in the spread of Buddhism and Indian culture.

Taking this into account, it is not surprising that, this year, Bhubaneswar was chosen to host "India and The Indian Ocean," an international conference on maritime trade and civilisation linkages. Bhubaneswar, a rapidly developing state capital has not hosted many events of this sort in the past and thus it has generated a fairly positive reaction and excitement in the city.

Mahesh Arora, representative of Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) says, an event like this would help India in reaching out to extended neighbours and restore India's relationship with them. Indian Ocean is the major binding factor for bringing together representatives of government, business and academia, for promoting co-operation and closer interaction among them.

Krishnendu Baksi, programme coordinator, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS) says, it is an ideal venue for the conference considering that Odisha has thousands of years experience in maritime trade. "This event would help in projecting Bhubaneswar as emerging city at international level for trade and commerce. Also this would help in attracting more tourist to the state."

Former State Information

Commissioner of Odisha and renowned development activist Jagdanand said that this conference was an excellent opportunity to revive the old, image the future and forge new relations with other nations. "Odisha's long and rich history of maritime trade makes it the most appropriate place to host this conference," he added.

Renowned sand sculptor Padmasri Sudarsan Patnaik expressed happiness that Bhubaneswar got the opportunity to host such an event. "It was a matter of great pride for us. And this will boost all sectors including culture, tourism and economy."

Anand Senapati, a businessman from Bhubaneswar who arrived in the city just two days ago feels that the conference would be beneficial not only to the people of the city but also entrepreneurs venturing outside India and trying to expand their business in foreign land. "It is the government's responsibility to ease the process of official formalities and protocols pertaining to trading in foreign land," he said. However, he added that he is disappointed that the event was

not being promoted and advertised sufficiently among the people of the city.

KV Krishna, an engineer from Jaipur who has been living in Bhubaneswar for last five years thinks that this event would not only facilitate foreign relations and boost foreign investment, but also give us more insight into matters of petroleum and crude oil usage, shipping etc. "India has resources, what we need to learn is how to utilize them for our development. Indian ocean, Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea connect us with far off land in South East Asia, Oceania and Africa and we should make use of these sea routes", he stated.

His colleague Anvesh Killamsetty, on the other hand, thinks that this event is all about rekindling Odisha's pride and rich heritage of maritime trade through coastal towns like Paradeep and Brahmapur.

"This conference will help in breaking barriers and boost cultural exchange. They could know about our civilization more and vice versa", he asserted.



TODAY'S EVENTS

Minute to Minute Programme of Inaugural Session

15:55 hrs: Welcoming of guests by master of ceremony

- Inviting all guests to the dais.
- Welcoming the guests with Angavastra and mementos
- Lighting of the lamp by Honourable Minister of External Affairs, Smt. Sushma Swaraj
- Theme song to be played in the background during the lighting of the lamp

16:10 hrs: *Speech by the Chair:* Professor Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS, New Delhi, India

16:15 hrs: *Welcome Address:* Sri Arindam Mukherjee, Secretary, ISCS, Kolkata, India

16:20 hrs: Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs, Govt. of India
Unveiling of Digital Blow up of the commemorative Postage Stamp on "Indian Ocean & Rajendra Chola I"
Release of the commemorative Postage Stamp on "Indian Ocean & Rajendra Chola I"

16:27 hrs: Speech by Sri Tilak De, Chief Post Master General, Odisha Circle, Department of Posts, Govt. of India

16:30 hrs: *Keynote Address:* Sri R. N. Ravi, Prime Minister Office, Government of India

Address by Guest Of Honour:

16:40 hrs: Sri Dharmendra Pradhan, Hon'ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India

16:50 hrs: Sri Sumith Nakandala, Secretary General, BIMSTEC, Dhaka

17:00 hrs: Release of book by Sri Naveen Patnaik, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha

17:05 hrs: Address by Chief Guest Sri Naveen Patnaik, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha

17:15 hrs: *Release of logo of Indian Oceans Resources Centre,* Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs, Govt. of India

17:20 hrs: Inaugural Address: Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs, Govt. of India

17:35 hrs: Vote of thanks by Sri Haraprasad Das, Chairman, Reception Committee

Rajendra Chola I first to succeed in martime trade

Thousand years have passed since Rajendra Chola I, one of the greatest ruler from the Indian sub-continent, ascended the throne and the significance of his reign is still evident. With trade between the South East Asian countries flourishing steadily and India looking to fix some existent problems, one must realise that this is not merely a twenty first century phenomenon. Ashoka did it more than two thousand years ago and then the Chola dynasty resumed it in 11th century AD.

In order to commemorate the exceptional achievements of Rajendra Chola I in expanding India's maritime influence using the marine routes of the Indian Ocean, the conference of IOR countries releases a special postal stamp in his memory.

It would be useful to provide an account of Rajendra Chola I's conquests and administration. What is most surprising is how Indian culture found itself integrated into these nations around the Indian ocean and maritime trade flourished even in those early days. Fulfilling his father Rajaraja's dream of conquering the whole island of Sri Lanka, he started his overseas conquest. Not only did he attack the cities of Srivijaya in the south

east but also conquered Pannai, Malaiyur, Mapappalam, Ilangasoka, Nakkavaram etc.

This helped in facilitating cross-empire interactions between India and South East Asia and strengthened India's business ties with China. The Song Dynasty of China, a contemporary of the Cholas, had the honour of welcoming the first Indian ambassador to their court during Rajaraja Chola's reign, and the second one during Rajendra's rule. His tenure also witnessed two merchant guilds being established in Burma and Sumatra during the 11th century AD, in the end of his reign. Similarly, Hinduism and Buddhism have always exerted a significant influence on South East Asian culture and it would be unjust to not credit Rajendra Chola for it.

Centuries have passed since Rajendra Chola I's death but India's relationship with the south eastern Asian nations still bear his signature. After India's independence, its first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru tried to maintain the healthy relationship with President Sukarno of Indonesia. Even in his book, 'Discovery of India,' Nehru wrote about the strategic and economic importance of the region.



Coming to more recent times, with the information technology industry booming in India and cultural ties between the two regions going stronger, PV Narasimha Rao's government aimed at introducing a new policy to boost up mutual cooperation between India and South East Asia in the economic and defense sectors. Vajpayee's (1998-2004) and Manmohan Singh's (2004-2014) administrations took it further.

Rajendra Chola I was undoubtedly one of the few Indian emperors to usher in a new phase in foreign relations. Even today, his achievements hold historical significance in India's ties with the south east Asia.

It can only be hoped that the relationship between India and the south east Asia will grow from strength to strength. And, Rajendra Chola I remains a symbol of the rich maritime heritage to inspire the country.

Welcome to Bhubaneswar



Dr. David LANG
Australia



Dr. V. Selva kumar
India



Mr. Zokey Ahad
Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner



Prof. Dennis Rumley
Australia



Prof. P. Shanmugam
India



Prof. Ranabir Chakroborty
India



Dr. Suchandra Ghosh
India



Ms. Saada Omar Wahab Tanzania
Dr. Jaya Josie South Africa

A unique treat for the delegates



The three-day conference, designed to celebrate cultural heritage and civilisation links of the Indian Ocean region while facilitating a dialogue among the nations, offers a special cultural treat for its guests and delegates.

Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) has flown in an 11-member troupe of dancers and musicians from Myanmar that would present a dance concert for the inaugural evening. The concert comprising the traditional, royal, folk and ethnic dance traditions, would offer a panoramic picture of Myanmar's rich arts traditions.

Led by U Yin Tun Pantra Mya Kui, the troupe would commence its concert with Myanmar's traditional solo dance tradition that shows the typical obeisance offered by the dancer to the audience. The next presentation would be a dance number choreographed in honour of the people-friendly Governor of Pakhan who ruled during 9th century.

Their royal dance would show how the dancing boys herald the traditional welcome of the royalty while another number would be based on the mural paintings of the Bagan period prevalent during 11th to 13th century. The other numbers in the royal dance segment include a touching episode from The Ramayana - the most powerful cultural link among the countries in Indian Ocean region, which shows Sita rejecting Ravan's offer of courtship. The duet dance number that would follow would be based on a 15th century love story of two mythical birds considered auspicious for Myanmar.

Their folk dance segment would showcase two dance numbers based on humour - a genre unique to Myanmar.

The ethnic dance section - presented by the group - would feature an array of colourful dances being performed by the large number of races inhabiting Myanmar. Over 100 races have contributed largely to the colourful mosaic of the country's

cultural heritage and the Don dance of Kayin is one such popular performing arts practice. Similarly, the Shah traditional dance - another enchanting ethnic form - belongs to the Shah ethnic group of eastern Myanmar. It would show the dance of the mythical birds.

The concert further gives glimpses into the country's various famous festivals celebrated through dances. April is the first month of Myanmar calendar and the Thingyan new year dance is celebrated for the occasion. During the dance, people splash water on each other - like the Holi, the festival of colours, being a celebration held in India, to wash away the sins and dirt of the old year. There would be another interesting duet

dance presentation - a competition between a human and a puppet who, finally, come together into a dance of harmony.

Odissi dance, the globally popular Indian classical dance of Odisha, would also be presented during the evening. Legendary Odissi Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra's Srjan Odissi Nrityabasa troupe from Bhubaneswar - presently under direction of his son and Odissi Guru Ratikant Mohapatra - would present Vande Mataram - a tribute to the motherland - that the legend had specially choreographed for 50 years of celebration of Indian Independence. The cultural evening would conclude with another spectacular Odissi dance presentation by famed Odissi dancer and Guru

Kumkum Mohanty's troupe that would stage the story of seven popular Hindu goddesses of Odisha. The production showcases elements of various folk, martial and classical dance and music traditions of Odisha.

History would come alive at the ancient caves of Udayagiri on Saturday evening as Saptavarna (seven colours) showcasing the seven shades of Indian classical dance and music would be staged by the 54-member troupe of dancers and musicians invited from various parts of India.

Saptavarna is a spectacular dance and music presentation - conceptualised and directed by veteran Odissi dancer and choreographer Guru Aruna Mohanty of Bhubaneswar - that aims to capture the unity in diversity and richness of India's performing arts traditions. It includes a selection of the classical, folk and martial dance forms of India. The complex art of percussion is also presented through an ensemble of drums.

'Saptavarna', literally means 'the different shades of the rainbow', which symbolizes the vibrant forms of Indian classical dances. Dancers of these varying forms move in different rhythmic patterns unique to their dance form. The distinctiveness of each dance form is captured individually, yet the differences between them come out vividly through their grace, grandeur, costumes and drums that support them.

While Aruna Mohanty has choreographed the Odissi segment, the other Indian dance traditions have been choreographed and are being staged by the respective exponents - Gopika Varma (Mohini Attam dance of Kerala), Manisha Nayak (Kathak, the north Indian dance tradition), Priti Patel (Manipuri dance style), Imocha Singh (Manipuri martial dance tradition of Thang-Ta) and Parswantha Upadhye (south Indian dance tradition of Bharata Natyam).





Let's explore the sea for development

Dharmendra Pradhan

Like most of my fellow Odias, the glorious maritime past of Odisha has always made me proud of my roots. All of us recall with great pride the history of Sadhaba Puas scaling new heights in trade and business with far-off countries via the sea route.

It is a fact that since ages, we Odias have remembered the legacy of our shared past and unique heritage. On the full moon night of Kartik each year, every water body in the state is flooded with toy boats as a remembrance of the voyages undertaken by enterprising Odias into sea. In many parts of the state, the occasion has turned into big celebration and extravaganza. The famous Bali Yatra held at Cuttack is expanding every year with the trade fair and the local delicacies Tunkapuri and Dahibara Aludam taking centre stage.

The question that often comes across in my thoughts is this: Shall we forever rest satisfied on the laurels of Odisha's golden days in the ancient past? Or, with the backdrop of a very rich and glorious past, Odias should look forward to a bright and prosperous future with lots of possibility emanating from the blue seas. I think the answer is obvious: we have to explore the sea for the development of our people. Let's not forget the fact that nature has bestowed Odisha with a sprawling 480 km long coastline.

I hope the International Conference on "India and The Indian Ocean: Renewing

Maritime Trade and Civilizational Linkages", will be an event that would make us peep into the past while also creating scope and opportunity to enable the state of Odisha to join the development spree in the Blue Economy initiative of the new Government under able leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which aims to explore and exploit India's huge potential on the sea front.

Hon'ble Prime Minister has always expressed his concern that states in the Eastern region of the country have lagged behind in terms of development with a large section of the people living in poverty and deprivation. Since assuming office, Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made it categorical that Eastern India is the top priority of his development agenda. Several initiatives have been taken by the new central government with the objective of improving the lot of common people in eastern states including Odisha. These include general and railway budgets, and the 14th Finance Commission recommendations accepted recently by the union government under which there shall be greater devolution of central receipts to the states and Eastern states like Odisha will be major beneficiaries. Many eastern states including Odisha are blessed with rich mineral and hydrocarbon deposits. The central government is ensuring that the states benefit the most from their sub-surface mineral wealth – the ongoing coal block auctions are an example

where the states will gain like never before.

Among the states in eastern India, Odisha has a unique natural advantage. Nature has bestowed Odisha with both abundant mineral wealth and a sprawling coastline, a combination which perhaps no other Indian state enjoys. This gives Odisha the potential to blend together 'Make in India' and 'Blue Economy' initiatives which can lead to the development and welfare of Odisha's common people for generations to come.

I feel concerned why we have failed to take advantage of what nature has bestowed us with? I feel excited as I scan through the opportunities that the sea provides and clearly see the possibility how Odisha, aided by its sea access, could grow at a faster pace. I am convinced that the time has come to harness the sea-based opportunities with a sense of urgency to ensure that our Odisha regains its rightful place as a modern, developed and progressive state in the Indian Union.

More manufacturing activity with huge mineral resources, development of multiple major ports, faster growth in downstream industries, using the coastline to exploit huge tourism potential and above all making every Odia a partner in progress – these are the challenges before us, which, in my view, are daunting, no doubt, but certainly not insurmountable.

This international conference on India's linkages with Indian Ocean has given

an opportunity to look within and find answers for all those doubts that crop up within us. The varied subjects that will be deliberated during this event - especially those on civilizational linkages, disaster management and humanitarian issues including skill development – are very topical for Odisha. Let's tighten our belts to take on the challenges and work in a concerted manner to realize the Odisha of our dreams.



The author is Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Petroleum & Natural Gas, Government of India, and can be reached at: Email mos.png@nic.in, Twitter- dpradhanbjp, Facebook - dharmendrapradhanodisha