

Mahasagar

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

Conference Newsletter

Saturday, March 21, 2015



Maritime security need of the hour: Sushma Swaraj

Advocating deeper economic ties in the Indian Ocean region and emphasis on maritime security, Sushma Swaraj, Minister of External Affairs pitched on Friday, March 20, 2015, for more robust cooperation in the region and said the geo-strategic importance of the area cannot be underestimated.

"As focus of global economic growth shifts to Asia, Indian Ocean has acquired greater salience in our strategic perspective. Our vision for the Indian Ocean Region is to build on use of our capabilities for the benefit of all in our common maritime home and assisting our maritime neighbours, island states, in building their maritime security capabilities," Swaraj said in her address at the inaugural ceremony of the conference of Indian Ocean Rim Countries titled "India and the Indian Ocean."

Organised by Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi, and Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS), Kolkata, the theme of the three-day conference is 'Renewing the Maritime Trade and Civilisational Linkages.'

Stressing on maritime security as an

important dimension of India's bilateral relations with all the Indian Ocean Rim countries, Swaraj said, "We will prosper when the seas are safe, secure and free for all. Those who live in this region have the primary responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean."

The region is witnessing non-traditional threats such as natural disasters, piracy, terrorism, illegal fishing, oil spills and effects of climate change.

"India is looking forward to building closer cooperation in the maritime domain, regularise bilateral maritime exercises and strengthen the dialogues between the navies and the Coast Guards with all littoral countries in the Indian Ocean Region," Swaraj said.

Opining that revitalising coastal economy is one of the keys to resurgence of a developed Odisha, Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas said, "We need to develop modern ports to facilitate trade, set up industries which can benefit from the state's coastline and give impetus to Small and Medium Entrepreneurs in this region to ensure better livelihood for the common person," Pradhan said.

Appreciating the theme of the conference, Pradhan said that time has come for the countries to collaborate extensively on this grave issue facing us and develop effective and workable solutions to forecast and cope with sea-borne natural disasters.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, while calling for a comprehensive geo-strategic policy to promote mutually beneficial engagements on an umbrella of issues relating to trade, culture, security and environment, quoted Alfred Thayer Mahan, an American Geo-strategist and Navy admiral, who had said "who so ever controls the Indian Ocean in 21st Century, will control the destiny of the world."

Also present on the occasion, R N Ravi, representative of the Prime Minister's Office said, "it is time to rediscover our cultural bonds and rim countries must trace their linkages of history, culture, civilisation and art."

Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General of RIS said, "We need to analyse our contemporary challenges emanating from trade, energy and other areas of cooperation."

Speaking on the occasion, Arindam Mukherjee, Secretary of ISCS said, "this conference will open up scope to exchange the scholarship view, review the historical facts and revisit virtually the prime period of maritime trade, analyse cultural linkages, rich heritage and tradition."

He urged that the region of Indian Ocean should be developed as zone of peace by bringing civil societies of the IORA countries closer to create a strong constituency for closer cooperation on a wide range of issues.

Mukherjee also announced launching of the new chapter of ISCS, the Indian Ocean Research Centre (IORC), the logo of which was unveiled by the Minister of External Affairs. ■

The present of our society has its root in a glorious past: Rituraj Sinha



The Indian Ocean Rim Countries' conference gathers lots of interests among intellectuals, think-tank groups and political as well as diplomatic circles. Rituraj Sinha, a young business leader of India and the organising secretary of the confluence "India and The Indian Ocean" speaks about the relevance of the event to expedite all-round development in the region while strengthening the relationship based on cultural and historical links.

As we know you are from industry and business background, what inspired you to be a part of this conference that aims at reviving maritime linkages with faraway nations on the edge of the Indian Ocean?

For any kind of business or economic development, it is very important to see that the macro-economic environment is favourable. Today, in India, industries are flourishing, businesses are growing, youth get more employment and this has been possible because of the favourable and stable macro-economic environment. This can be possible only in this globalised world, when the macro-economy of the countries are interdependent. Somewhere, our economy and our stability is connected with our neighbouring countries and rest of the world.

During my studies, my focus was on international business and trade. Even today, the business I am running, i.e. SIS, is amongst India's largest employers. I think our growth is directly linked to the trade cooperation or development cooperation, general economic cooperation that we maintain with our neighbours and rest of the world.

When I came to know about this conference and the ideas of Arindam (Secretary of the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies), I got influenced. I thought the civilisational linkages between our neighbours and the world kept us connected, and we decided to discuss about trade cooperation. This concept altogether appealed to me and I made up my mind to support the concept in every possible way. This was because, in this globalised world and inter-dependent economies, India must utilise its rich culture and civilisational legacy to make a place in global economic as well as political scenario. That's why, I got connected with this event.

What, in your views, can revive the relationship based on the past linkages with our neighbouring countries?

My idea in this regard is bit different. Before taking any decision in this regard, it is important for both the parties to have an understanding. For any bilateral or multilateral political as well as economic initiative for resolution of issues, there should be deep one to one understanding. When it comes to one to one understanding, we need civilisational and emotional linkages as well.

While in a foreign country, if we see their lifestyle and thoughts similar

to that of ours, we immediately feel a warm connection. But, when a foreigner comes to our country and has very little or almost nothing similar to us, it takes time to connect with them. So, I think the vast cultural connection of India with the other Indian Ocean countries should be revived in order to create a long term and sustaining economic and geopolitical cooperation. We need to connect by our hearts and to connect by heart we have to remember our shared history and shared legacy.

If you look back into history, India was the exporter of many things - not just goods, but also the philosophy of Buddhism and even many rulers, what made the relationship so dormant through these years?

Being an ordinary Indian, I believe, India has treasures of historical and cultural linkages and legacy, but we have never utilised it.

We all know that India has never tried to conquer any other country. It has always tried to connect people through trading, culture, religion and philosophy. So, for us, adopting the western style of diplomacy, according to me, is not an ideal move. But when it comes to the several other countries, they may utilise the western diplomacy. They, however, do not have any ancient legacy because they are comparatively new civilisations. But in our case, the present of our society has its root in a glorious past. So, why should not we discuss about Gautam Buddha and the kings who have built philosophical and trade connections with others in the Indian Ocean region and beyond? Why shouldn't we celebrate their

achievements? We need to strengthen our historical roots and it would strengthen our future cooperation and rejuvenate the trade linkages, which we need to leverage.

Most other businessmen do not share similar ideas like you, why?

I studied abroad; I have been travelling and spending a lot of time abroad for business and other professional purposes. I am the youngest chairman of the industry committee of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). When I talk and discuss about business with the businessmen of my age group, I do not think they forget or skip the historical roots of India.

The young businessmen have an urge to see India as a global super power and to keep the aspirations up we need to expand in areas our country is good at, i.e., trade. I accept the fact that we have not given enough importance to our rich heritage as many other countries do. But I am sure, the youngsters and aspiring businessmen are going to revitalise our relationship based on historical linkages and heritage.

What are your expectations from the upcoming conference?

ISCS, the organiser of the event, has been doing good work in Myanmar and Bangladesh since many years. The institute is taking another big step through this conference. I strongly believe, this is a good start. The aim of this conference is to revive our cultural linkages with greater enthusiasm and we are going to organise more such events in the coming days. To me, and hopefully to many others who want to see India as a global power, this envisages a new era. ■

For overseas participants Bhubaneswar has many things to offer



The first day of the conference "India and The Indian Ocean" witnessed a myriad of delegates and guests from all around the world arriving in Bhubaneswar. People from various Asian countries and some from even as far as Australia and France graced the event as several ministers and organizers addressed the inaugural ceremony on Friday.

This is the first time that Bhubaneswar is hosting such a major international event. Guests arriving at the conference are also looking forward to experience the cultural heritage of Odisha and touring the city.

Dr Francis Albert Kornegay, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Global Dialogue, University of South Africa, feels that this conference is unique as it has a cultural dimension.

"This place has quite a heritage which is something worth knowing," he said.

While Dennis Rumley, Professor of Indian Ocean Studies and Distinguished Research Fellow at Curtin University Western Australia, feels that Bhubaneswar is a potential tourist hub, still relatively unknown to the foreigners.

"Bhubaneswar is an amazing place and I had never heard of this place before but, after arriving, it's a great feeling. It is a clean city," Rumley said.

It's also a first time visit to the city for Jean Francois Salles of the French National Council for Scientific Research even though he had been to India before. Speaking about his maiden visit to the city, he hoped to tour it if he gets time after the conference.

"I have been coming to India for around fifteen years now. I have colleagues in Jawaharlal Nehru University and Calcutta University. So I used to visit Delhi and Calcutta previously," Jean said.

Dr. Chotima Chaturawong, assistant professor of Silapakorn University,

Bangkok, explained how there has been a socio-religious connection between India and South East Asia since ages and credited Emperor Ashoka for spreading Buddhism in the South East. She has come to experience the culture and history of this region.

"I look forward to something related to the propagation of Buddhism", she stated.

Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive of South African Institute of International Affairs, also said that she looked forward to explore India's maritime culture and specifically that of Odisha.

Residents of the state have also come forward and extended their hospitality

generously. Director of the Bhubaneswar Centre for National Archives, and Odiya writer Lalatendu Das Mahapatra narrated how Odisha's maritime culture dated back to more than two thousand years. Stating that Odisha's temples are a major attraction, he recommended the visitors to see the Rajarani temple nearby.

"Bhubaneswar has many things to offer. I hope they get the time to tour the place. Udaygiri, Ratnagiri and Lalitgiri are great heritage sites and one wouldn't want to miss them while they are here", he said.

A Biotechnology inventor S.C. Rajesh expressed satisfaction saying, "Oceanic business has been a part of Odisha's

culture for centuries so this conference will benefit maritime business and cultural exchange." Adding on to it he said that Konark temple and Chilika Lake are perfect places to grab the attention of foreigners.

Traditionally known as the City of Temples, Bhubaneswar was named after Tribhubaneswar, the Lord of the three worlds. Situated sixty kilometres from Puri and Konark, the city has no dearth of tourist attractions and architectural wonders and it perfectly exemplifies the amalgamation of century old cultural heritage and cutting edge modern urbanism. ■



Beefing up security in Bay of Bengal

Rahman Jahangir

The international courts' verdicts over disputes with India and Myanmar have made the maritime boundary crucially vital for Bangladesh, an overpopulated country with scarce resources. The Bay of Bengal has now offered new opportunities for the country to exploit hitherto unexploited resources lying in the Bay.

The country, in fact, has gained much from the verdict over the 25,602 sq km of disputed Bay area with India. Foreign firms now have lined up since tender has been floated for exploration of Bangladesh's 10 new sea blocks for hydro-carbon. An extension of sea border means Bangladesh's chances of exploring the Bay for mineral resource have now widened. It will also enrich the fisheries sector.

The massive Bay area is now open to our fishermen. Even if two fishes are caught in every square kilometre, our fishermen will have 40,000 more fishes to sell. The verdict now allows Bangladesh to establish its sovereign rights on more than 118,813 sq km of territorial sea, 200 nautical miles (NM) of exclusive economic zone and all kinds of living and non-living resources under the continental shelf up to 354 nautical miles from the Chittagong coast.

On the other hand, the country has a largely marshy jungle coastline of 710 km on the northern littoral of the Bay of Bengal.

Against this backdrop, the government has undertaken a Taka 3.70 billion (One US\$ is equivalent to 78 Taka) project for safety and security of our maritime system. Under the project, seven light houses and coastal radio stations will be established through 'turn-key method' in the coastal areas. Besides, one command and control centre will be built in Dhaka to maintain 24-hour communication with the ships that will ensure maritime security and strengthen surveillance.



The successful implementation of the project will fulfil the obligations under international conventions by establishing and operating shore-based facility on maritime safety, security, surveillance, navigational aids and communication system including command and control centre.

But it is indeed distressing to see our sea guards still failing to track down boats with illegal migrants taking risky sea voyage to Malaysia and Thailand across the Bay. It is not really understandable why we still see abortive attempts of migrants making hazardous sea voyage despite the fact that our Navy fleet as well as Coast Guard is having most modern equipment to detect such illegal operation in the Bay. What can the country do if foreign trawlers sneak

into our deep-sea area to catch fishes illegally?

Frequent press reports of illegal sea voyages by trawlers or pirates kidnapping our fishermen make it urgent for our maritime security guards to be alert and efficient enough to accomplish the onerous tasks they are assigned with. This fact has to be taken note of by the higher authorities which alone can do the needful.

Kuakata in Patuakhall, Saint Martin's and Kutubdia of Cox's Bazar, Hatia (Nijhum Dwip) in Noakhali, Dhalchar (Char Fashion) in Bhola and Saran Khola (Dublar Char) in Patuakhall are major points of marine fishing. Then there are a number of rivers and creeks inside the vast Sundarbans having huge stocks of fish.

The Bay coast is set to assume great importance after a deep seaport and other ports are built making the area a hub of sea-borne ships. The Petrobangla is set to float tenders next year to invite international oil companies for hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation. Precious minerals as well as huge stocks of marine fishes abound in the Bay. That is exactly why maritime security has to be beefed up. If needed, technical assistance of the Indian Ocean Run Association (IORA) of which Bangladesh is a member, could be sought in this regard.

The writer is Editorial Consultant, The Financial Express, Bangladesh, and is a participant of the conference as a Resource Person. He can be contacted at his email: arjayster@gmail.com.

History is the answer to questions that the present brings: Jean Francois Sallas



A historian and archaeologist by profession, Jean Francois Sallas of France, a participant resource person of the conference of IOR countries, hopes that such conferences would certainly revive relationship between Indian Ocean countries and facilitate dialogue.

What is your view about this conference of Indian Ocean countries?

I feel this conference is important because, many people from the Indian Ocean countries are visiting, and it's a good opportunity to meet them. And since I am an academician, an archaeologist basically, it's important for me to meet people and, secondly, to learn a lot of things. Because I am specialised in one field of academia, here I will be listening and learning about other disciplines, which is interesting. And another thing is

that I am not finding much westerners, I think I am the only one from west, from France.

India had strong relationship with countries in the Indian Ocean region and beyond. Do you think this conference would help reviving such relations?

We agree this is very important to bring together all people from the Indian Ocean Rim. But it is not isolated for the rest of the world because everything is intermingled.

I am an historian of antiquity and archaeology. Trade relations between China and Bengal, as we know now, started in the second century BC. Trade relations and intellectual relations between the west and India started much earlier, in the fifth century BC and so on.

Do you hope this conference would revive the relationship and activities as India had in the past?

Well, one of the famous historian of France

had 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.

Do you believe, history will repeat?

Why not! It repeated for thousands of years!

How, in your views, this will help the other countries? Because many countries who are part of this conference are poor?

They were poor countries, now the situations are changing firstly because they have altogether tried to raise their competitiveness, raised their economy and so on and so on. But they do not do it by themselves. They receive helps or advices to do it. This process is going on since thousands of years.

Can we say, this conference is going to expedite the process, facilitate dialogue?

Most Probably, yes!

Sand art shines at the conclave



Odisha's internationally acclaimed sand artist Sudarsan Pattnaik has greeted the delegates of the conference with an imposing sculpture of Lord Jagannath highlighting the unique navakalebara ceremony of the three deities - Lord Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra.

The ritualistic event usually occurs once in 12 years during which the deities – regarded as human gods – renounce

their old bodies and take up new ones, like the human beings die to be born again (as per the Hindu belief).

The renowned artist has put Odisha's centuries old sand art tradition of Puri prominently in the global platform by participating in more than 50 international sand art festivals and by winning championships in international sand art competitions for nearly 30 times.

"I decided to highlight navakalebara of Lord Jagannath in June through my art here for two reasons. I wished to let the huge number of participants of this forthcoming famous rituals to take place in my home town of Puri that would be witnessed by several lakhs of pilgrims and tourists. Lord Jagannath comes out of His abode – the temple – once in a year for the famous Rath Yatra

(Car Festival) to offer an opportunity to those who have not been able to have a darshan of him inside the temple. I am aware, all the delegates of the conference would not be able to come to Puri to have a darshan of the deities. So, I thought Lord Jagannath, through this piece of sculpture, could be here to bless the delegates," revealed Sudarshan, who has also been the brand ambassador of Odisha Tourism.

Postage Stamp, Books Released



In the inaugural ceremony of the confluence of Indian Ocean countries, held in Bhubaneswar, India Post released a special postal stamp on 'Indian Ocean and Rajendra Chola I,' to commemorate thousand years of coronation of the Chola ruler.

Also four books including 'Trade and Investment Prospects of the IORA in the New Millenium,' written by SK Mohanty and Priyadarshi Dash, 'Indian Ocean: Biodiversity and Traditional Medicinal knowledge,' edited by Ameenah Gurib-Fakima and K. Ravi Srinivas, 'Mapping the Indian Ocean,' by Babul Dey and 'The Indian Ocean Civilisation,' written by Arindam Mukherjee were released on the occasion.





Showcasing Burmese culture

The first day of 'India and The Indian Ocean: Renewing the Maritime Trade & Civilisational Linkages' conference has been a success, whether it is the case of the formal conference or the cultural event.

With the stage set up in a garden, the ambience of the evening grew better with the first performance, which was a Burmese dance.

The dances included dramatic folk and puppet dances, each having distinct characteristics. The dance forms depicted some of the Burmese historical and fiction stories. performances were very fast-paced, and comprised of energetic movements. The emphasis was more on grace in the pose, not in movements.

The most striking feature of the cultural evening was a very rare dance form known as the "Ku she you do mo", which is said to be a humorous folk dance. This dance form received the maximum applause from the audience and successfully brought a wide smile on the viewers' faces.

There were dance forms involving puppets as well. The astonishing part of the dance was that the puppets were not simply used as prop, but they acted as the dance partners. Some of the Burmese puppet dance forms involved "Marionettes" that began with the puppets dancing. There was another puppet dance by a single puppet named "Zoshi," a lad with supernatural powers and the Royal Page Boy.

The Burmese dances also depicted fictional stories of two mythical and auspicious birds, the male called "Kinnara" and the female "Kinnari." The Bagan period dance was another form of Burmese dance form, which was influenced by the paintings of that period.

The Burmese culture was magnificently showcased in the cultural evening. It swayed the foreign delegates, making them curious further to visit this country under the Indian ocean region.

Probably they would be looking forward to such upcoming conferences to have another glimpse of the dance form.



TODAY'S EVENTS

PLENARY I

Venue: Central Hall, MayFair Convention

9.00 hrs-10.30 hrs:

Session I: Historical Linkages and Cultural Networks in IORA

Chair: Dr. Mahesh Sharma, Hon'ble Minister of State for Culture and Tourism (Independent Charge) Book Release

PLENARY II

Venue: Central Hall, MayFair Convention

11.30 hrs-13.00 hrs:

Session II: Regional Maritime and Energy Security in Indian Ocean

Chair: Mr. Saurabh Chandra, Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas

PARALLEL SESSION I

14.30 hrs-16.00hrs:

IA : Trade Linkages: Routes, Commodities and Merchants

Venue: Board Room, MayFair Convention

IB: Religion and Literature: Buddhism, Brahmanism, Epics and Secular Literature in Sanskrit

Venue: Orchid, MayFair Lagoon

IC: Migration and Diaspora in the Indian Ocean Realm

Venue: Camellia, MayFair Lagoon

19.30 hrs: Cultural Programme (Venue: Rani Gumpha, Udayagiri)

CANVAS OF CULTURE AND COMMERCE



For any visitor to the exhibition of panels of photographs, sketches and illustrations on display, it has been a journey back in time revisiting the shared history of more than a thousand years of the nations and civilizations of the Indian Ocean region.

The exhibition, aptly titled - Indian Ocean: The Seafaring Legacy – and curated carefully by ISCS Secretary Arindam Mukherjee, the brain behind the global convention, was inaugurated by host Odisha's Minister of Tourism and Culture Mr. Ashok Chandra Panda on Friday. The exhibition reveals India's indelible influences – cultural, civilisational, commercial, linguistic, literary, diplomatic - over these nations and regions.

While the vast Ocean has been named after India that speaks volumes of India's centuries old dignified leadership over the region, its amazingly deep-rooted cultural bonds with the nations tell a thousand tales of India's cultural conquest of the region.

Garuda is the national symbol of Thailand. Indonesia's official language is Bhasa. Words like Vidyalaya, Devalaya, Prem, Karuna, Sagar and Sraddha are often found in Thai vocabulary while mythological names like Subhadra, Rukmini and Padma can be heard in Vietnam. Dingo, the Australian dog in demand world-wide, is believed to have an Indian origin. All such startling facts come to the fore as one strolls through the tastefully mounted exhibition at the sprawling lawns of the Mayfair Lagoon – the venue of the conference in the temple city of Bhubaneswar.

The most moving section of the exhibition has been the panels showing the influence of Ramayana on the art, dance and sculpture of several countries. Often episodes from The Ramayana are being enacted in the classical dance style of Thailand. The Indian epic also continues to be

popular in the dance traditions of Bali (Indonesia). An exhibit reveals a war scene from The Ramayana in form of a painting on the walls of Emerald Buddha in Thailand. Another piece of art on a temple in Laos carries stories from The Ramayana. The oldest version of Ramayana in Java was scripted in 856 CE. The puppetry tradition of Malaysia has also been replete with influence of The Ramayana. Similarly, the stucco art of Thailand and the stone craft of Indonesia also bear such traces of the epic.

As one moves forward, one comes across the description and photographs of the remains of a port city in ruins – Oc Eo in Vietnam – where an ancient Hindu temple exists amidst hillocks where Buddhists come to pray. The port city was flourishing during 1st to 6th century CE. In Laos, the statues of the Indian gods of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are found in Champasak temple. Similarly, another panel reveals that the stories from The Ramayana and The Mahabharat are being heard on Prambanan temple in Indonesia.

The majestic Hindu temple of Angkor Wat in Cambodia, the Jataka stories of Buddha in wood carving in a temple of Thailand and the presence of

Abalokiteswara and Tara – the most favoured deities protecting the seas – have been of much interest for any visitor having interest in India's shared past with the world.

A very rare revelation in the exhibition has been the story about the Socotra Island. Situated at a distance of 320 kilometres off African coast, Brahmi inscriptions have been discovered while in the ancient Qana city of Yemen, Indian bronze figures dating back to 3rd century CE have been traced.

The exhibition further reveals how Afghanistan and Tajikistan were under Kushan Empire during 50 CE to 200 CE. Similarly, the range of Roman coins indicate about the trade commenced under Augustus III. A number of indigenous Indian ceramic products have also been discovered from the Roman empire giving ample evidence of Indo-Roman maritime trade links.

Like culture and religion, trade and commerce also strengthened the bond between India and the countries in the Indian Ocean region. A very interesting revelation in the exhibition has been the passion of the Roman women towards gold, pearl and perfume from India. Romans had an insatiable appetite for Indian luxury

goods like ivory, pearl, spices, dyes and cotton but they treasured Indian spices with more care than the rest of the goods!

The other exhibits in the trade link segment shows how Sri Lanka had assumed much significance as the main centre of trade by 5th century CE. Further, one comes across the cotton route – the next important route to the silk route and the spice route – that was established during the 1st century CE in the Indian Ocean.

How was the science of navigation during those ancient times? A section in the exhibition enlightens about the shipping navigation – how stars, the moon and the sun were the guiding factors for the sailors. Mapping Indian Ocean – though a technical explanation – offers an idea about the science and technique of measuring the sea.

Maritime trade tradition can never be traced without the role of boats and over the centuries boats have undergone massive transformations – from a bundle of logs floating in the river to the majestic ships of modern times ferrying across the seven seas. A section in the exhibition tells us the tale of Indian boat designing tradition in its wide variety. The ancient cave art of Ajanta, the temple of Jagannath in the ancient town of Puri in Odisha, the Buddhist stupas of Sanchi also bear images of boats.

For those who take keen interest in culinary culture, the section on the culinary habits in Maldives reveals how fish, food and coconut oil of Kerala had much influence.

Finally, one is amused to learn from the exhibits that banana reached Africa from India in the 2nd millennium BCE while the giraffe in stone shown on the spectacular Sun temple of Konark in Odisha establishes the Indo-African links centuries ago.

SHYAMHARI CHAKRA



India and The Indian Ocean: the relevance

Salim Jumaya Suleiman Alsenaidi, Manager Deputy, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Branch in Sharqiyya South Governorate

Trade between India and Oman has a history of several thousand years. Exports from India to Oman are on the rise as Indian products are achieving a brand name across the globe. Close cultural relations between the two countries are among other driving forces, which are contributing to the increase in the commercial engagements between the two countries. This conference is an ideal interactive platform for entrepreneurs from Oman who look for fresh openings to do business with India and vice versa.



Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive, South African Institute of International Affairs

In the contemporary era it is necessary to talk about regions since there is so much of connectivity among various nations. This connectivity has negative as well as positive effects. On the negative front, phenomenon like terrorism is being witnessed from South East Asia, Middle East to Africa. On the positive side, there is connectivity in maritime sphere right from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. Hence, it becomes imperative to know and learn from experiences of various regions.

One of the global tension is that of human security. Even though we claim that globalisation has created a global culture, yet the issues of identity still remain pervasive across the world. In times of crisis, identity often becomes the rallying cry for mobilisation.

I am also looking forward to explore India's maritime culture and history as well.



Dr. Chotima Chaturawong, Assistant Professor, Silapakorn University, Bangkok

I have come to experience the culture and history of this country. And I look forward to something related to the propagation of Buddhism. There has been a connection between India and the South East Asia since the days of Ashoka, who spread Buddhism in South East Asia.



Dr. Francis Albert Kornegay, Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Global Dialogue, University of South Africa

I am here mainly to exchange thoughts and ideas with other people in the conference and the Indian Ocean. The key here is networking with like-minded people.

I think the conference will increase awareness. Indian ocean is the centre actually, where there is energy trapped and, in fact, it is the world's main quarter.

This place has quite a heritage which is something worth knowing. And the best part of the conference is, it has a cultural dimension, which a lot of conferences do not have.



Dennis Rumley, Professor of Indian Ocean Studies and Distinguished Research Fellow, Curtin University Western Australia. He has been appointed Australia's focal point in the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group

Well, there are quite a few people with whom I had interacted in some previous conferences, and we have been doing research for about seven years dealing with Indian Ocean cooperation - be it educational, energy or security. About security, I do not mean the traditional security but the whole range and aspect of security including the environmental security, human security, economic security, energy security etc. Over the last two or three years, Blue economy seems to have been the norm but nobody seems to be knowing about it. Some are not interested. We need greater cooperation to sustainably exploit the resources of the Ocean. This conference will help in building cooperation.



Dr. Monika Chansoria, Senior Fellow and Head, Asian Security Programme, Think-tank of the Indian Army, Delhi

It should be interesting to see the importance of regional peace and security and the dialogue between different countries. The most important threat to security and peace in this region is maritime terrorism and there needs to be greater collaboration between nations and stakeholders.

