

Mahasagar

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

Conference Newsletter

Sunday, March 22, 2015



India targets to raise global tourism share to 1%

India is set to raise its share of global tourism to 1 per cent from 0.64 per cent at present, in the next couple of years, Union Culture and Tourism Minister Dr Mahesh Sharma said at the International Conference on 'India and The Indian Ocean,' on Saturday.

While highlighting the need for infrastructure to promote tourism in the country, Dr. Sharma said, "Indian Ocean region is our prime focus as Prime Minister Narendra Modi aims to strengthen relationship within the region. We have 7500 Km of coastline of which around 485 Km is in Odisha. It has huge potential to attract tourists from across the globe. Hence we are promoting it by initiating various programmes 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 a long way in promoting tourism around coastal belt of India."

Recently, government has allocated 500 crore rupees to create five new

tourist circuits in India during the current fiscal. Further, the Centre launched the National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY). To give a boost to religious tourism, they are to set up the national mission on pilgrimage, rejuvenation and spiritual augmentation drive (PRASAD).

Our PM's recent visit to Seychelles, Mauritius, Sri Lanka is the example of government's initiative in this direction. Government is giving more importance to promote ties with our IOR neighbours which will not only strengthen the security of our vast sea lanes in Indian Ocean but also secure our age-old cultural relations with them.

Sharma was chairing the session, 'Historical Linkages and Cultural Networks in IORA' at the conference.

Speaking on the same topic, Kishore Basa, Professor of History, Utkal University delved on archaeological evidences of India's trade with Rome and South-East Asia. He said there are archaeological proof which suggests about the demand of plant and animal products in Rome. Products like sesame

seed, spices and cotton were exported to Rome.

"The best archaeological record of Roman presence can be found in southern India, specifically at Arikamedu, a Tamil fishing village which was formerly a major Chola port dedicated to bead making and trading with Roman traders," Prof Basa said.

Various Roman artefacts such as a large number of amphorae bearing the mark of Roman pottery schools have been found at the site, supporting the view on a huge ancient trade between Rome and the ancient Tamil country of present day south India.

He also spoke about South East Asia's interest in trade with India. Spices, glass and semi-precious stone were main items of trade.

J F Salles, Archaeologist from France, 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 talked about Alexander-Augustus times, sailing from the Mediterranean to India.

"It is believed that Alexander came to India not only in geographical quest, but cultural as well as religious expedition," Salles said.

He also delved on Indus and Nile connection and Alexander's expedition to Hindukush.

Prof. Ranabir Chakravarti of the Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, spoke about Jewish Merchants in the Indian Ocean during 1000-1300 CE period. He presented a paper, 'India and the World of Indian Ocean Maritime merchants in the documentary Geniza.'

P Shanmugam, Professor, University of Madras, Chennai, talked about 1000th anniversary of Rajendra Chola I's coronation and its significance.

The three day international conference, organised by the Institute of Social and Cultural Studies (ISCS) jointly with Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), is being attended by the representatives of about 20 countries situated in Indian Ocean Region. ■

We need to exchange development ideas with others: Dharmendra Pradhan

What strategic outcomes you expect from this international conference of Indian Ocean Rim countries?

These kind of conclaves revitalise and rejuvenate some old ideas and is a good occasion to create strategy for future. As the civil society members, policy makers, think-tanks, bureaucrats and experts from industries meet in such a platform, it creates an energy. From the perspective of this happening in a place like Odisha, certainly the things will be on ground and Odisha may benefit from the ideas emerging out of this kind of interaction.

The Indian Ocean has larger significance from the perspective of oil and natural gas reserves. So do you see Indian Ocean becoming the energy capital of the world?

It will be wrong to say that Indian Ocean will be the energy capital of the world because China is the major consumer and they are not linked to Indian Ocean directly, but indirectly. USA and Europe are also major consumers, yet they are not linked to Indian Ocean. As all of us emphasized in the inaugural session of this conference yesterday, 90 per cent of the oil trade is linked to the Indian Ocean. All these are changing. At one point of time, hydrocarbons were used only for fuel. Off late, more new ideas are coming in. More molecule monetisation of hydrocarbon in these areas are coming up. I



hope Indian Ocean and India can play a vital role and this can be a petrochemical hub for domestic as well as international requirement. For the international market we can create this as a new concept. We are refining for ourselves and will refine little more for the places we will be exporting to. While we are now exporting in diesel and petroleum form, we can export in the form of petrochemical by-products. This will add more revenue, more value and will create new employment

avenues. These kind of things have to be planned .

You spoke about blue economy in India. Do you think we can make it as Mauritius did?

In some areas we have our expertise. In some areas, Bangladesh may have their expertise, same with Sri Lanka and China. This is mutual cooperation. I think fishery will be a very strong economic activity in those areas to develop and grow.

We need to exchange our ideas on

economy. Vietnam is not among Indian Ocean countries, but a country near to the Indian Ocean. Vietnam fought a big war but the GDP of Vietnam is constantly nine percent. It is a model one can replicate in other developing countries. In Bangladesh, they have fully developed a robust micro-finance system in the name of Grameen Bank. We should replicate it in rest of South East Asia. Similarly, there are several local models which are replicable. ■

Merchant shipping issues must be discussed



Gautam Mukhopadhyaya

First and foremost, I must compliment and congratulate the government of India and also the independent organisation ISCS from Kolkata, who is organising this first of its kind conference. At least to my knowledge there has not been any previous experience where we have tried to bring all the people from the Indian Ocean on one platform, talking about different aspects of possible cooperation whether it is the cultural linkages, whether it is the trade related interactions, whether it is maritime security deliberations.

So, it is a great initiative. And it is a coincidence that our honourable Prime Minister has spoken about blue economy and is taking this to its logical destination. This conference is going to take further what he has said in Mauritius or Seychelles.

In that context it is a welcome initiative by RIS and the other organisation. There are many intellectuals, historians, academicians and people who have worked in different governments in the past. I have understood that we all in the Indian Ocean region have a role to play in global politics, global economy and global strategic position.

Everybody is talking about two third of oil movement, fifty percent of container cargo movement. Those are just statistics. But it is the sheer volume and the kind of activity we are seeing in the Indian Ocean is what's important to me.

India is at the pivotal position. So it has both the advantages and responsibility because we are midway between the trade routes. We are the biggest landmass in the Indian Ocean and, in a way, are overlooking the Indian Ocean. Therefore, India has a responsibility in the Indian Ocean related activities.

This conference has definitely created a sense of responsibility and understanding in the larger audience of this country and more people would feel like participating in this process.

One of the aspects that I would personally like to come into the discussions is merchant shipping because that is related to the trade.

If we are looking to be a major player in the global trade and economy, obviously there is going to be large volume of cargo that will move in and out of our country as well as the whole region because Africa is the richest resource continent that is available. In ten fifteen years, whole of Africa will see great economic activity and if that has to happen without any dangers or challenges, then the cooperation between the Indian Ocean countries is very very essential.

This conference will definitely be helpful in this regard because it will increase cooperation among the countries.

Author is the Indian High commissioner to Myanmar. ■

Winning without wars - the Indian way



Culture has been our strength since ages - India's Minister for Culture and Tourism Mahesh Sharma stated this while presiding over the first plenary session of the conference on "Historical linkages and cultural networks in IORA," Saturday morning. This was an endorsement by the minister to India's age-old philosophy that claims, wars can be won without weapons. The two major sessions that followed under the segment of culture during the day established how India's culture, literature and religion have conquered the hearts of the people in Indian Ocean region for centuries.

The three-day conference has three major components to deliberate upon - culture, economy and security. Catering to India's ideology of giving utmost emphasis on cultural ties, the plenary sessions have been commenced with cultural perspective of IOR.

The touching presentation made by Prof. Ranabir Chakravarti from the Centre for Historical Research at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, on the Jewish merchants in the Indian Ocean during the 1000-1300 CE revealed how the region was quite peaceful till the Portuguese invasion. The sailors and merchants were Jews, Muslims and Hindus but there was no religious intolerance among them during the time.

"This was the spirit of Indian Ocean culture. Like the Panchayati Raj system prevalent in India, a system of sharing existed then among the nations and races in the region," his findings established.

In another interesting presentation - Vietnam Gold Leaf (deities) - by Ms. Le Lien Thi from Institute of Archaeology in the afternoon plenary session on "Religion and literature: Buddhism, Brahmanism, Epics and Secular literature in Sanskrit," it was revealed how Hindu pantheon prominently figured on the large collection of gold plaques found across excavation and

exploration sites across southern Vietnam. Her presentation - covering over nearly 900 years of history - showed images of hundreds of such gold coins that carried images of Vishnu, Baraha, Shiva, Brahma, Surya, Kubera, Varuna, Yama, Indra, Agi and many more.

Similarly, Professor Chotima Chaturawong from Silpakorn University of Thailand made another engaging presentation on the Buddhist architecture in Thailand and Myanmar during 14th and 15th centuries. It revealed how Buddhism reached Thailand through India and profoundly influenced its temple architecture. The mandap (the space found in the temples of Odisha) is also known by the same term in the Buddhist shrines in Thailand and Vietnam. Dhammasala is another such name for the hall, where dharma (religion) was being explained, has also been discovered in Thailand. Her talk established how Indian Buddhism, language and temple tradition had profound penetration in Thailand's culture and heritage.

The brief but highly evocative presentation in the afternoon session made by Professor Amarjiva Lochan of the Department of History and Culture from the University of Delhi was on Ramayana in the Arts of South East Asia. It revealed how the Indian epic has, literally, conquered all aspects of culture of the countries in the Indian Ocean region. The professor, who has extensively documented the trends across a number of countries, exhibited images of paintings of Ayodhya found in Thailand and Cambodia. Further, he showed depiction of Ravana in the temple sculptures in Indonesia.

However, it was amazing to come across at least 50 illustrations of the exile of Rama-Lakshman-Sita reflected in textiles, paintings, puppetry and murals across the region. Similarly, their life in the forest has been elaborately depicted in the leather puppetry of Indonesia, textile paintings of Myanmar, theatre of Cambodia and opera of Vietnam. Jatayu, the mythical bird, depicted

as a saviour in The Ramayana, has become a prominent part of the folklore of entire South East Asia. Even a town has been named as Lavapuri after Rama's son Lava! Such has been the powerful influence of the Indian epic on the culture and civilisation of the Indian Ocean region.

The Indian Navy was rightly represented through Lt. Cdr. Kalesh Mohan, Deputy Director of Naval History Division at the Ministry of Defence. His deliberation in the plenary session on Indian maritime linkages further established the social, cultural and religious aspects of India's cultural conquest over the Indian Ocean region. Citing evidences from archaeology, ancient texts like the Vedas, the Buddhist Jataka tales, the literatures in Sanskrit and Pali and in the Indian folklores, he established the links with the culture and heritage of the countries in the region that spoke volumes on India's influence and cultural conquests.

SHYAMHARI CHAKRA





As the Indian Ocean Region is gifted with abundant natural resources and is surrounded by developing economies, the region has ample opportunities which can spur trade across the region if tapped appropriately, says Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General of New Delhi based Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), an organiser of the international conference titled "India and The Indian Ocean."

IOR: progress and conservation priorities: Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi

The regional groupings around the world are formed on the basis of some objectives. What are the main objectives behind formation of IORA?

Most important objective of any regional cooperation is to achieve welfare gains for all the members. IORA has several such distinctive features to its credit. The Association aims to bring prosperity to the region by expanding economic growth and strengthening maritime cooperation.

What is the role of RIS in IORA?

RIS has been providing key policy inputs on IOR Cooperation since the inception of IORA in 1997. RIS has also undertaken a number of substantive studies addressing different areas of cooperation in the region. Regional cooperation is one of the flagship programmes of the RIS and it is working towards promoting economic cooperation in the region. We have undertaken intensive studies to identify the barriers impeding the growth of the region and suggesting ways to overcome them. My colleague Prof. S.K. Mohanty has been leading RIS work programme in this area. He was Chairman of IORA Academic Forum for two years.

What are the key recommendations of the present study 'Trade and Investment prospects of the IORA in the New Millennium: New Economic Frontiers of the Region'?

The study observes that the IORA can be a mutually beneficial regional economic grouping by expanding economic linkages in the region. The region has potential economic complementarities and empirical analysis indicates that the region has ample opportunities which can spur trade across the region if tapped appropriately. The intra-regional trade (IRT) of the region is rising faster than the total trade of the region with rest of the world. This shows the strength of the region and with a radical trade strategy the IRT can deepen further. The region

has numerous opportunities in areas of processed food, mining, pharmaceuticals, among others, which can be explored and expanded seeing the extent of competitiveness and demand pattern of each of the member countries.

Since the countries in the region are developing, there are vast investment opportunities in the region in almost all areas of economic activities, including infrastructure, manufacturing and services. Investment is critical for improving productivity and enhancing growth and employment. There is need for appropriate investment enabling environment for growth of intra- and extra-regional investment flow.

Adoption of various trade facilitation measures could improve trade linkages among the member countries and implications of such measures could go beyond tariff liberalisation. Some of these measures include developing stronger links between the regulators and, in due course, entering into mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) to deal with the issues of technical barriers to trade (TBT); sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures (SPS); customs cooperation and the harmonisation of standards and conformity assessment. Inclusion of various WTO-consistent trade remedy provisions may not undermine the benefits of trade liberalisation. Procedures for handling goods at ports and customs clearance may be simplified and made more efficient. Increased frequency of direct shipping routes, reduced costs of transportation and expansion of air cargo facilities between the member countries need consideration.

Usually we see that regional groupings are formed around landmass but IORA is formed around an ocean. Why the need was felt for such grouping and what made it different?

Yes, often the groupings are around a landmass but this grouping is around

the Indian Ocean. The reason for forming such grouping was the similar experiences and problems that countries around the Indian Ocean faced in terms of maritime trade routes as well as use and exploitation of the natural resources in the vast ocean. It is the presence of natural resources in free boundaries that makes IORA different. It is necessary that the countries situated around the Indian Ocean work towards the progress and conservation of the region. As also pointed by our Prime Minister Mr. Modi, the responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indian Ocean lies with people living in its vicinity.

Has RIS worked on the resource base in the Indian Ocean Region?

Yes, RIS has done intensive studies on the natural resource base in the region which is available in plenty in the region. The region has rich biodiversity and RIS has been working closely on the issues of biodiversity and traditional knowledge. It brings out the journal Asian Biotechnology and Development Review. We have also brought out a special issue on biodiversity in the Indian Ocean which has been launched as a book entitled Indian Ocean: Biodiversity and Traditional Medicinal Knowledge in the conference.

How can traditional knowledge help in the growth of the region?

Increasing interest in health and healthy living has given a boost to herbal medicines. The region has vast knowledge about the medicinal plants which have survived the vicissitudes of time and have proved to be effective since ancient days. Sharing of this traditional knowledge and resources among the members can boost the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the region. This would also generate employment in the region as there is huge global market for herbal drugs, which is expanding continuously.

TODAY'S EVENTS

PLENARY III

Venue: Central Hall, MayFair Convention

9.00 am-10.30 am

Session III: Regional Economic Cooperation in Trade and Investment in IORA

PARALLEL SESSION III

11.30 am-1.00 pm

III A: Sectoral Cooperation

Venue: Board Room, MayFair Convention

III B: Blue Economy

Venue: Orchid, MayFair Lagoon

III C: B2B

Venue: Camellia, MayFair Lagoon

VALEDICTORY SESSION

VENUE: Central Hall, MayFair Convention

13.55 hrs: Arrival of the Chief Guest/ H.E. Dr. S.C. Jamir, Governor of Odisha

13.55 hrs: National Anthem

14.00 hrs: Welcome Remarks by Prof. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS)

14.10 hrs: Presentation of 'Bhubaneswar Declaration' by Prof. S. K. Mohanty

14.20 hrs: Address by Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Hon. Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Petroleum & Natural Gas, Govt. of India

14.30 hrs: Address by Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India

14.40 hrs: Valedictory Address by Shri Manohar Parikar, Hon'ble Minister of Defence, Govt. of India

15.00 hrs: Special Address by H.E. Dr. S.C. Jamir, Hon'ble Governor of Odisha

15.25 hrs: Vote of Thanks by Prof Kishore Basa, Secretary, Reception Committee

15.30 hrs: National Anthem



IOR conference discusses maritime and energy security issues

India and the Indian Ocean: Renewing the Maritime Trade and Civilisational Linkages discussed, on the second day, the issue related to "Regional Maritime and Energy Security in Indian Ocean."

As part of it, the session covered the aspects related to the security of the energy resources of the Indian ocean.

Prof. Dennis Rumley, Professor of Indian Ocean Studies of Curtin University in Western Australia emphasised on formation of an Indian Ocean Maritime Security regime, which can look after

the wellbeing of the countries that are connected to Indian Ocean. He spoke about the IORA Perth Communiqué 2013, IONS Maritime Safety and Security, and about the Ten Maritime Energy Security Stakeholders.

The second discussion revolved around the concept of changing the environment of maritime security scenario. The talk was delivered by Dr. Francis Kornegay, Senior Research Fellow of Wilson Centre, South Africa.

Dr. David Lang, Analyst and Editor of ASPI's

blog said there was a necessity of trust, understanding and cooperation amongst the countries who were connected by the Indian Ocean.

He also said proper strategic dimensions and agendas could help to secure the landscape as well as the Ocean and build cooperation. "We need to propose legal frameworks for which information sharing is the key to fight maritime attack," he said.

He also suggested exchange of search and rescue agencies amongst the countries. The conference also evoked the

importance of the coastal India, especially Odisha, which played a very important part in the ancient maritime trade relationship. He also emphasised on the reclamation of maritime history.

"History becomes important in helping revive the maritime relations," said C. Rajamohan, Head, Strategic Studies and Distinguished Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, India.

Dr. Elizabeth Sidiropoulos, Chief Executive of SAIIA, South Africa stressed on reclamation of maritime activities. ■

Why this conference was necessary?

Tapan Mitra

Actually, let me tell you, it is too late to think this way. But still, since the awareness has come, we have started thinking and the result of the thinking is this conference. I practice one philosophy and that says, "If you like to bring good for yourself, first you think of your neighbours."

If you do something for your neighbours, if you pray for your neighbours, the first good thing will come to you.

I am talking about one to one. But if you think in the same manner related to these Indian Ocean Rim countries, or as Indians if we think of growing and developing in so many ways, then we have to think about those countries and their people because with our help they will grow and develop. With their help, we will grow and develop.

You can see that, India is very powerful in many ways, including our thought process. Previously our leaders thought that they will find ways, but now the situation has changed, we are thinking in different ways. And, we are happy that ISCS, our organisation, in collaboration with the RIS have come to the point that we can do it. And, you can see this has happened. We have implanted the seeds of awareness for the future.

You will see, this will develop and I am very positive about this. It will grow and develop. Thank you.

(Author is the Acting Director of ISCS, Kolkata) ■



Ports key to support economic activities: Prof Rila Mukherjee

Almost all economic activities took part around the ports and they became nodal points for the seekers during the age of exploration, said Prof Rila Mukherjee of University of Hyderabad.

Speaking about trade linkages and their roots, Mukherjee hinted on importance of ports in promoting economic activities in the hinterland since they act as a crucial interface between sea and land transport. She said, there are gaps in the understanding of the pre-industrial ports and port-cities that necessitate a fresh look. Reiterating the role of ports in economy of a country, Mukherjee said, "It is time to renew and redefine ports position in Indian Ocean."

Suchandra Ghosh, Professor of History, University of Calcutta and Radhik Seshan, Professor at the University of Pune delved on Cotton Trade across Indian Ocean. Both spoke about splendours of cotton, an overview of its trade and production in early India. Exploring how cotton was exported, Ghosh said, "The oldest examples of Indian trade textiles have been found at sites near the Red Sea. Small fragments from 15th century were discovered at the Greek trading post of Berenike in Southern Egypt."

Tracing the history of trade and cultural exchanges during the time, Seshan displayed Indian textiles dating between 14th to early 19th century. During the peak of the trade in early century, millions of yards of Indian clothes were sold in markets of Rome and China. Artisans



in India used natural dyes to colour textiles as they lasted for a long time without fading. "India's central location in the Indian Ocean basin was ideal for trading textiles to both East and West, with Gujarat, the Coromandel Coast and Bengal being the major trading centers."

Focusing on ancient maritime connection of Tamizhagam in South India and their historical implications, Dr V Selva Kumar, Professor, Tamil University, talked about ancient port sites and markets in South

India.

Recently, an archaeological exploration was conducted at Pattanam in Kerala. Scientific analysis of material collected from the area suggest that maritime activity is as old as 500 BC, there.

"The artefacts recovered from the excavation site suggest that Pattanam, with a hinterland port and a multicultural settlement, may have had links with the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and the South China Sea rims since

the early historic period of South India," said Kumar.

Pattanam is now identified as the thriving port called Muziris by the Romans. Tamil Sangam literature celebrates it as Muciri. Stressing on the need to convert pre-historic trade links into modern trade, Sumith Nakandala of BIMS-TEC called upon ideas to build the past international trade into coherent narrative in the present time.

Blue economy changing Mauritius

The new age economy is on the rise, which has its reach not only in connection to land and its borders. On the contrary, it has oceanic reach. The term Blue economy is not too old, but the reach it has in the present scenario has left behind the idea of agrarian economy. The myriad numbers of countries are extensively harnessing their oceanic resources and one amongst them is Mauritius.

In the initial stages of its development, Mauritius was more or less dependent on its agrarian economy and the industrial side was also being explored. But, by and large its dependency has drifted from agrarian to blue economy which is leading the country in the league of most successful democracies round the world.

Mauritius is an open economy which allows free flow of trade with its trading partners and the concept of blue economy has geared up its economy to a higher level. In the present scenario the government is keen on promoting the ocean economy as one of its prime pillars of development. For further exploration of the ocean economy, the Mauritius government has dedicated departments like Fisheries, Marine resources and Outer Island. On top of that the relevance of the blue economy in the



country is depicted by setting up of the legal and the regulatory framework for monitoring it.

The country has a total maritime area of 2.3 million square kilometers out of which 1.96 million square kilometers is exclusively dedicated for the economic activity. The areas of concern for the government are like seabed exploration for hydrocarbons and minerals as extraction which plays a vital role in strengthening the economy. But their focus still lies in fishing and aquaculture as they had been dependent on it since long and till date they are trying to glorify it to the next platform. There are many more activities like marine services,

seaport related activities and mineral renewable energies which are being taken up under the realm of blue economy.

The tale of its success does not end up here and it very much fosters the idea of green economy. In the era of privatisation at its peak where the prime concern is monetary gains, at this level prioritising environment is like going out of the box and that too sustaining its economy also is needed. The marine environment provides people with innumerable services reaching from food security and climate regulation to nutrient cycling and storm protection. These are the factors which forms the basis

for the success of blue economy in Mauritius.

The only thing which puts its success at risk is the negligent attitude of the people. The need of the hour is sustainable development along with economic development and it can happen only if people are more aware and are not negligent towards their duties. Polluting and degrading the oceans will only lead to their own downfall despite coming up with highly advanced technologies for boosting the economy.

The economy of Mauritius is enveloped under the accomplishments of blue economy. In the current year the government is more watchful in this arena and measures are being taken to harness all possible means for developing ocean economy. The area of concern is to foster maritime trade and rejuvenate its economy by and large.

This is very much depicted by the fact that its economy is being included among one of the fast growing economies and the credit goes to development in the area of maritime trade and all other related activities, which directly or indirectly are linked to the ocean. It has immense potential for the development which will play pivotal role and by all means the success for the economy of Mauritius is interlinked with the blue economy.

Celebrating unity in diversity through Indian dance and music



History came alive Saturday evening at the ancient Jain heritage site of Khandagiri-Udayagiri as Saptavarna, a specially choreographed dance concert featuring six Indian dance styles was staged on the backdrop of Ranigumpha as a special treat to the invitees of the conference of Indian Ocean Rim countries. It was at this site that Emperor Kharavela, the then ruler of Kalinga (present day Odisha), used to host concerts of dance more than 2000 years ago. The stone image of a dancing woman seen on the walls of Ranigumpha - believed to be the oldest evidence of dance in the region - has made the site a much preferred pilgrimage for dancers, scholars and researchers from far and wide.

The production featuring five of the eight Indian classical dance traditions - Odissi, Kathak, Manipuri, Bharatanatyam and Mohiniattam apart from the martial dance form of Thang-Ta from Manipur - was conceptualised and directed by eminent Odissi dancer and choreographer Aruna Mohanty, from Odisha.

"India boasts of numerous forms of dance and music that included the eight Indian dance traditions and three major classical music traditions. Our country celebrated its unity in diversity. And it was my idea to put this celebration through this concert of dance and music for the global audience who have assembled in our city of Bhubaneswar for the conference. Saptavarna denotes the seven colours of the rainbow, literally," explained Aruna Mohanty.

The captivating concert that attempted to capture the diversity and richness of India's performing art traditions also incorporated elements of Indian classical, folk, martial and tribal dance forms while the complex art of percussion (drums) was presented through an ensemble of drums. Retaining the beauty and individuality of each dance form, the composite

concert was harmoniously blended into a confluence. Though there was no link of a narrative to weave a story, the rhythmic patterns of the dances formed the beautiful thread.

While Aruna Mohanty choreographed and led the Odissi contingent, Mohiniattam was led by Gopika Varma, Kathak by Monisha Nayak, Manipuri by Priti

Patel, Thang-Ta by Imocha Singh and Bharatanatyam by Parswanath Upadhye.

Well-known Odissi music composer-vocalist Ramahari Das and veteran rhythm composer percussionist Dhaneswar Swain - both winners of India's national awards for performing arts - nicely complemented the concert with their mesmerising music.



Indian Ocean: the future energy capital?

**Alex Benkenstein, Programme Manager,
South African Institute for International Affairs**

I think technological cooperation will play a big part in making this zone the energy capital in future. South Africa is a good example of it. South Africa has vast coal resources and it has successfully developed fuel sources from its coal reserves. Increased partnerships in trade between India and African nations will certainly help. Mozambique and Botswana are also developing their coal resources. There is a lot of scope in the traditional energy sector. But energy environment is changing and we need to invest in renewable sources of energy, that is the way of the future. In the meantime, if you look at the scale of India's energy needs, we will be relying on some more traditional energy sources like coal, oil and gas.



**Andi Arsana, Ph.D.
Kepala Subdit, Kerjasama Internasional**

What we need to do is to ensure collaboration among the countries around Indian Ocean. We have already done that to quite an extent. But we need to strengthen our ties now. This conference will be the perfect platform for that. As far as trading of fuel and energy is concerned, Indian Ocean is our lifeline. Being from Indonesia, which is a country facing the Indian Ocean, we need sea transport. We need to utilise the sea lines of communication and then, through greater collaboration between the countries, we can move towards further development.

Shri Pillay, First Secretary (Political), South African High Commission

I think in the context of Indian Ocean as an energy producer, the focus should be on renewable sources of energy. The countries around this region should share their indigenous knowledge and intelligence and that would help in greater cooperation between them. For example, India has done a lot of work on wind and solar technology. South Africa is also on its way of building some big wind farms along the east coast of the Indian Ocean. So technical cooperation with India in this aspect is something we can look forward to. Moreover, there are new technologies coming up looking to use tidal waves to produce energy and I think all the nations around the Indian ocean should focus on this.



Professor SK Chattopadhyay, Kolkata

There is a lot of potential reserve of natural gas under the seabed of Indian Ocean, but I am not very sure about fossil fuel though it might be available through offshore drilling in the littoral countries of Indian Ocean. But there are lots of minerals in the sea bed. There is no doubt about that. But besides minerals, the aquatic resource is huge. If we can stop indiscriminate fishing, we might be able to prevent the plunder of bio-diversity in the area. But fossil fuel and natural gas will be limited in the next fifty years anyway.