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Comity • Commerce • Culture



Indian Ocean Conference 2016

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About Indian Ocean Conference 2016

India Foundation in association with S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore; Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), Dhaka and Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Colombo hosted a two day "Indian Ocean Conference 2016" from 1-2 September 2016 at Singapore. The Conference witnessed a participation of over 300 delegates from 22 countries including ministers, politicians, diplomats, strategic thinkers, academics and media.

The Indian Ocean Conference 2016 endeavoured to engage critical states and

principal maritime partners in the Indian Ocean Region to deliberate on myriad issues impinging on region-wide national security and national development in the region. This was done by bringing together geo-strategic, geo-economic and geo-cultural issues affecting maritime affairs and moving it from the exclusive concern of national security planners and the strategic establishment, and connecting it with the broad swathe of popular opinion, discourse, consciousness and imagination, across IOR communities and societies.

Schedule of Indian Ocean conference | 2016

Day 1

1st September, 2016

Brief Schedule of Day 1

Workshop 1 - Comity

Workshop 2- Commerce (Trade)

Workshop 3 - Commerce (Investment)

Workshop 4 - Culture

Inaugural Session and Welcome Dinner

Workshop 1

Sub-theme: Security Dimensions of the Indian Ocean Region:
Perspectives and Approaches to Maritime Competition, Maritime
Diplomacy and Maritime Cooperation

Chair: **Ambassador G Parthasarathy**, Former Ambassador of India

Speakers:

1. **Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad**, Chairman, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies
2. **Mr Bertil Lintner**, Journalist and Author, Thailand
3. **Dr Nicolas Regaud**, Special Adviser to Director General for International Relations and Strategy, Ministry of Defence, France
4. **Mr Lee Cordner**, Fellow, Indo-Pacific Governance Research Center, University of Adelaide, Australia
5. **Mr Wang Xiaowei**, Director, Center for Peace and Development Studies and Chief Editor, Peace and Development Magazine, China

Workshop Session 1 Comity

The centrality of the session was maintained at the various sectors of co-operation and challenges faced by the region. Few of the most prominent areas of discussion were maritime security, rapid growth of illegal and criminal activity, problem of unsecured and closed trade routes and the growing dispute between countries over extraction rights.

Workshop 2

Sub-theme: Blue Economy and National Development in the IOR:
Trade, Transit and Technology, for Socio-Economic Prosperity

Chair: **Amb Ashok Kantha**, Former Ambassador of India

Speakers:

1. **Dr Sanjaya Baru**, Distinguished Fellow, International Institute of Strategic Studies (London) and The United Services Institution of India
2. **Dr Razeen Sally**, Chairman, Institute of Policy Studies, Sri Lanka
3. **Mr Ravi Velloor**, Associate Editor, Global Affairs, The Strait Times
4. **Mr Philip Green**, High Commissioner to Singapore, Australia
5. **Dr Pradumna Bickram Rana**, Associate Professor and Coordinator of International Political Economy Programme, RSIS, Singapore



Workshop Session 2 Commerce (Trade)

The session in general focussed on the centrality of Indian Ocean to global trade. It was pointed out that the Indian Ocean Region includes the largest energy producers as well as consumers. Yet, there is more wealth that passes through the Indian Ocean than remains.



Workshop 3

Sub-theme: Indian Ocean Region as a Business Opportunity - Investing, Capital and Market

Chair: **Amb Ong Keng Yong**, Executive Deputy Chairman, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore

Speakers:

1. **Mr Ralph L. (Skip) Boyce**, Vice President, Boeing International and President, Boeing Southeast Asia
2. **Mr Manraj Sekhon**, CEO and CIO, Fullerton Fund Management
3. **Dr Leslie Teo Eng Sipp**, Chief Economist and Director, economics & Investment strategy, GIC
4. **Mr MK Singh**, Former member of parliament, India



Workshop Session 3 Commerce (Investment)

The session primarily focussed on the prevailing investor sentiment in India and in the Indian Ocean Region as a whole. All the speakers concertedly lauded Prime Minister's "Make in India" initiative and welcomed the passage of Goods and Service Tax Bill.

Workshop 4

Sub-theme: Acculturation in the IOR: Culture, Tradition and Civilization in Maritime Commons Development

Chair: **Dr Patrick French**, Writer, Biographer and Historian, United Kingdom

Speakers:

1. **Dr S Kalyanaraman**, Co-Director, Saraswati Research Center, Chennai, India
2. **Mr Tissa Jayatilaka**, Executive Director of the Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission, Sri Lanka
3. **Ms Moe Thuzar**, Fellow, Lead Researcher (Socio-Cultural Affairs), ASEAN Studies Centre & Coordinator, ISEAS, Myanmar
4. **Mr Kwa Chong Guan**, Senior Fellow, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore



Workshop Session 4 Culture

While the discussions were focussed on the significance of art and culture in shaping the history of the region, there were references to the development of Sanskrit Cosmopolis, Project MAUSAM and the One Belt One Road initiative. There was also consensus on the need to strengthen tourism, education and culture in order to enhance people to people ties.



Inaugural Session

Inaugural Session and Welcome Dinner



Delivering the welcome address **Mr M J Akbar**, Minister of State for External Affairs of India, talked about the geographical position of India in the middle of the Indian Ocean, and called India the western frontier of peace and the eastern frontier of war. He concluded by saying that India seeks measures that will facilitate the natural flow of peaceful interaction and consequent growth through cooperation.

Inaugural Session-

Special Address: **Smt Sushma Swaraj**,
Minister of External Affairs, India

Inaugural Address: **Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe**, Prime Minister, Sri Lanka

Address-


1. **Dr Vivian Balakrishnan**, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Singapore
2. **Mr Nitin Gadkari**, Minister of Road, Transport and Highways, India



Addressing the gathering via video link, Minister of External Affairs of India **Smt Sushma Swaraj** focussed on the significance of the Ocean in the history of ancient trade routes, cultural linkages and common heritage. She reiterated India's commitment of working with its littoral neighbours to fully develop the blue economy, and of working with IORA for sustainable growth and development.

A photograph of Dr. Vivian Balakrishnan, the Foreign Minister of Singapore, speaking at a white podium. He is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt, and a red tie. He is gesturing with his right hand while speaking into a microphone. The background is dark with some vertical light patterns.

Taking the stage, **Dr Vivian Balakrishnan**, Foreign Minister of Singapore spoke of the Indian Ocean being a conduit of cultural exchange and trade. He spoke about the common history of colonialism that all the countries of the region had shared and how in the last seventy years shackles of colonialism have been broken. He then went on to talk about the future of the region in fifty years.

A photograph of Mr. Nitin Gadkari, the Minister of Road, transport and Highways of India, speaking at a white podium. He is wearing a white shirt and a grey vest. He is gesturing with his right hand while speaking into a microphone. The background is dark with some vertical light patterns. A logo for 'Indian Conf' is visible on the right side of the podium.

In his address, **Mr Nitin Gadkari**, Minister of Road, transport and Highways of India, spelled the Modi Government's policy on port development and revival to link coastal and island territories. He elaborated on the objectives of Sagarmala Project and briefly touched upon the Special purpose Vehicle on maritime projects overseas, India's coastal shipping agreement with Bangladesh and developing the Chabahar port in Iran.



Delivering the Inaugural Address of the Conference, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka H.E. Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe spoke about the balance of power shifting towards Asia and the reduction of western dominance in the global markets. He had also briefly touched upon the cultural diversity of Asia and noted that Indian Ocean has emerged as one of the world's busiest and most critical trade corridors surpassing the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.



Schedule of Indian Ocean conference | 2016

Day 2

2nd September, 2016

Brief Schedule of Day 2

Conference Keynote Session

Plenary Session 1 - Comity

Plenary Session 2 - Comity

Plenary Session 3 - Commerce

Plenary Session 4 - Culture

Valedictory Session

Conference

Keynote Session

Chair: **Mr Đặng Đình Quý**, Deputy Foreign Minister, Vietnam

Keynote: **Dr S Jaishankar**, Foreign Secretary, India



Conference

Keynote Session



In his remarks, **Dr Đặng** highlighted the strategic importance of the ocean's geographical location and how the peace, stability and prosperity of the world are dependent on the peace, stability and prosperity of the region. He reaffirmed Vietnam's pledge to play a role in the maintenance of peace and stability in the region with the countries in IOR.

Dr S Jaishankar in his address said that India supports freedom of navigation and over flight, and unimpeded commerce, based on the principles of international law, as reflected notably in the UNCLOS. Referring to Project Mausam, he said it promotes archaeological and historical research on cultural, commercial and religious interactions and has become a vehicle for knowledge exchanges, networking and publications



Plenary 1 Comity

The first plenary session on the theme of Comity focussed on the management of maritime borders, climate change, utilization of the oceanic resources and the need to maintain ocean health by striking a balance between conservation, exploitation and utilisation of marine resources.

Plenary Session 1 Comity

Chair: **Mr Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali**, Foreign Minister, Bangladesh

Keynote: **Mr Maumoon Abdul Gayoom**, Former President, Maldives

Speakers:

1. **Mr Nobuo Kishi**, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Japan
2. **Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed**, Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, Malaysia



Plenary Session 2 Comity

Chair: **Amb Hardeep Singh Puri**, Former Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, India

Speakers:

1. **Rear Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh**, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff, India
2. **Rear Admiral Donald Gabrielson**, Commander, Logistics Group Western Pacific, USA



Plenary 2 Comity

The second plenary session on the theme of Comity highlighted the defence personnel's perspective of the Indian Ocean as a facilitator of trade, tourism, infrastructure, marine science and technology and protection of marine environment for the overall development of blue economy.



Plenary 3 Commerce

The plenary session on Commerce talked about greater economic connectivity in the Indian Ocean Region. The session also stressed on India's improving indices in terms of ease of doing business, competitiveness, innovation and FDI and the relevance of the passage of the GST bill.

Plenary Session 3 Commerce

Chair: **Shri M J Akbar**, Minister of State for External Affairs, India

Speakers:

1. **Dr Hung-Mao Tien**, Chairman of the Board, Institute for National Policy Research, Taiwan
2. **Ms Nisha Biswal**, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, US Department of State, USA
3. **Mr Jay Panda**, Member of Parliament, India



Plenary Session 4 Culture

Chair: **Prof Lokesh Chandra**, President, ICCR, India

Keynote: Mr Vira Rojpojchanarat, Minister of Culture,
Government of Thailand

Speakers:

1. Dr Shashi Tharoor, Former Minister of State for External Affairs, India
2. Mr Santaram Baboo ,Minister of Arts and Culture, Mauritius
3. Mr S.B Navinna, Minister of Internal Affairs, Wayamba Development and Culture Affairs, Sri Lanka
4. Mr A. Kohilan Pillay , Former Deputy Foreign Minister, Malaysia



Plenary 4 Culture

The session focused on the common, composite culture in the Indian Ocean Region and the central role played by India in developing this by virtue of its central geographic location. Indic philosophy, beliefs and religions spread through peaceful means and harmonised with indigenous cultures to become the basis for many cultural expressions in the Indian Ocean Region.

Valedictory Session

Chair: **Amb Kanwal Sibal**, Former Foreign Secretary, India

Valedictory Address: **H. H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**, Founder, Art of Living Foundation



The Valedictory Session of the Conference was chaired by former Foreign Secretary of India **Amb Kanwal Sibal** with the Valedictory Address being delivered by His Holiness **Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**, Founder, Art of Living Foundation.



Delivering the Valedictory Address of the 2-Day Conference, H.H. **Sri Sri Ravishankar** appreciated the idea of confluence of Culture and Commerce at this point in time when both of them were moving in opposite directions. He said that while our Culture was moving eastwards, commerce was towards the west. He highlighted the importance of 'education of peace' for a prosperous and happy world and further termed the Indian Ocean Region to be an example of culture of peace. He further went on to talk about the significance of dialogue in being able to reconcile the existing situation of turmoil. He concluded by expressing hope that there would be a wave of happiness in the region as the ultimate goal of Comity, Commerce and Culture was to achieve happiness.

Detailed Report of the sessions

Workshop Session 1 (Comity)

The India Foundation in association with S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Singapore; Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS), Dhaka and Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Colombo hosted a two day “Indian Ocean Conference 2016” from 1-2 September 2016 at Singapore.

The Conference witnessed a participation of over 300 delegates from 22 countries including ministers, politicians, diplomats, strategic thinkers, academics and media.

Day one of the Conference started with parallel workshop sessions on the three sub-themes of Comity, Commerce and Culture followed by the Inaugural Session and Welcome Dinner. The first parallel workshop on Comity chaired by Ambassador Parthasarathy (India), had a panel of five speakers. The first speaker Ambassador Munshi Faiz Ahmad, Chairman, BISS in his intervention stated that “India being the great country that it is, should naturally lead the initiative of a dialogue in the Indian Ocean Region with responsibility, taking everyone else along in a fully inclusive effort”. He went on to talk about military security of the region and stressed on the need to move away from rivalry and towards co-operation. He touched upon different aspects of maritime co-operation like the challenges of piracy and trafficking in maritime navigation, the problem of unsecured and closed trade

routes, exploitation of resources, dealing with natural disasters and strengthening of SAARC for a prosperous South Asia.

The second speaker Mr Bertil Lintner, renowned Author and Journalist listed four factors that make the Eastern Border the most important one for India. They were: Trade, Energy, National Security (Cross border terrorism and arms smuggling) and geopolitical considerations like the rise of China. Mr Lintner's remarks were followed by an intervention by Mr Wang Xiaowei, Director, Center for Peace and Development Studies in which he talked in detail about China's One Belt One Road initiative.

Dr Nicolas Regaud spoke about the challenges faced by the nations of the region and the need to boost national and regional capacities. He expressed concern about the insufficiency of natural resources, rapid growth of illegal and criminal activity, and the

growing dispute between countries over extraction rights. He also appreciated the Heads of Asian Coast guard meeting being held annually since 2004 and termed it to be a useful forum.

Mr Lee Cordner termed Indian Ocean Region to be a region of common risks and shared vulnerabilities. He used cartographic references to highlight the importance of the region in maritime domain, oil and gas security and to mitigate risks.

Wrapping up the session Ambassador Parthasarathy highlighted the fact that 40% of the world's oil supplies, 60% of world's oil trade and 80% of Japan's oil requirement flow through the Indian Ocean. Also, 95% of India's trade is through Indian Ocean and 80% of India's requirements come through the same route. He concluded by saying that “Indian Ocean belongs to all of us, it belongs to humanity”.



Workshop Session 2: Commerce (Trade)

The workshop session on Commerce (Trade) which was chaired by Ambassador **Ashok Kantha (India)**, and on the panel were: **Dr Sanjaya Baru (India)**, Distinguished Fellow, International Institute of Strategic Studies, **Mr Philip Green**, High Commissioner of Australia to Singapore, **Dr Razeen Sally**, Chairman, IPS, Sri Lanka, **Dr Pradumna Bickram Rana**, Associate Professor and Coordinator of International Political Economy Programme, RSIS and **Mr Ravi Velloor**, Associate Editor, Global Affairs, The Strait Times.

In his introductory remarks, Amb Kantha highlighted the fact that only 20% of the trade traffic through the Indian Ocean is intra-regional in character and 80% of it goes to other regions.

Dr Baruspoke about India's experience as a trading nation, the problem of trade deficit

and the fundamental shift in India's trade direction from the West to the East. He briefly touched upon the movement of people across the region and the cultural linkages amongst the Gujarati Community in East Africa, Tamil community in South-East Asia and Bihari community in Mauritius among others. He also termed the movement of people as an economic phenomenon.

The session in general focussed on the centrality of Indian Ocean to global trade. It was pointed out that the Indian Ocean Region includes the largest energy producers as well as consumers. Yet, there is more wealth that passes through the Indian Ocean than remains. This lack of wealth is an impediment to deepen regional integration and in the fight against the challenges of inequality, poverty and food crisis in the region. The need to promote blue economy and impart dynamism to IORA-ARC as an

international forum was stressed.

All the speakers unanimously felt that intra-regional trade should increase and simultaneously work be done to promote an ecosystem which respects international laws and conventions. Nations of the Indian Ocean region also need to identify the direction their economies should take to ensure growth. With the rise in intra-regional trade there would be an increase in job creation, economic opportunities and movement of people. Various speakers also mentioned the persistence of inward looking tendencies related to trade in South Asia. But with the economic rise of India this is set to change. Australia too has invested heavily in its western coast and has recognized the Indo-Pacific region as the region for strategic importance. Speakers also recognized the importance of trade for not only economic well-being but also for global peace.



Workshop Session 3: Commerce (Investment)

The third workshop session was on the theme of Commerce (Investments). The panel comprised of: **Mr Ralph L. (Skip) Boyce**, President, Boeing Southeast Asia, **Mr Manraj Sekhon**, CEO and CIO, Fullerton Fund Management, **Dr Leslie Teo Eng Sipp**, Chief Economist and Director, Economics and Investment Strategy, GIC and **Mr N K Singh**, Former Member of Parliament, India. The session was chaired by **Amb Ong Keng Yong**, Executive Deputy Chairman, RSIS, Singapore.

Mr Boyce in his opening remarks of the session called India an obvious partner and shared his aim of being able to quadruple sourcing from India in the next four years. He spoke of the changing investment environment in India in terms of ease of doing business, tax issues, legal obstacles, talent availability and the scale of demand. Mr Boyce while concluding reiterated his

commitment of developing a globally competitive aerospace supply chain in the India Ocean region. He also lauded the Prime Minister's Make in India initiative, and termed it to be a very important part of Boeing's strategy for India and highlighted the fact that his company's priorities for the countries of the region were aligned with that of India.

The second speaker **Mr Manraj Sekhon** described the Indian Ocean Region from an investor's point of view and said that there was once a time when investors would say "You invest in China because of government's policies and invest in India in spite of government's policies". He elaborated on the demographics of the region and how India was at an advantage when compared to countries of East Asia which were ageing. He also mentioned the three key challenges that India is facing at the

moment, which were: demographic dividend changing into demographic disaster if not dealt with properly, corruption which was going down but was still a concern and the state of balance sheets of both the private and public sector banks. He expressed his concerns about the over-leveraging by private banks and need for recapitalisation of public sector banks. While concluding, he lauded the government of India for initiatives like inflation targeting, bankruptcy code, initiation of the process of recapitalisation and the passage of Goods and Service Tax Bill.

Mr N K Singh in his intervention expressed concern over Europe's struggle to cope with multiple challenges. There were grave uncertainties on how it was going to manage to remain one entity while dealing with the problems of migration. He also pointed out that recovery in the US was exceedingly



tentative and while the US may remain an important technology leader and the leader in multiple ways, the European growth engines may or may not be what they have been historically. He listed five ingredients that were driving the Indian state. They were: (a) Redefining the role of the State (b) Macro fundamentals of the Indian Economy (c) Infrastructure – Quality, Cost and Competitiveness (d) New partnerships being sketched between centre and states, and (e) States competing with each other on various indices. He concluded by saying that jobs, education, skills and orderly urbanisation were going to be the major challenges for the Modi government in this term and the next. However, he also expressed satisfaction about the course of government's preparation for these challenges.

The fourth speaker of the panel **Dr Leslie Teo** Eng Sipp highlighted five challenges that the region was facing: Exit from unconventional monetary policy, High level of debt in the region, Lower growth prospects in the OECD countries, Infrastructure investments and Technological disruption. He then elaborated on each of the points individually. He concluded by saying that technology could actually be a great enabler for most of our countries, technology could solve major infrastructure problems, technology could make one person in one small country influential globally, but how could we use it to benefit our citizens was a huge political and social challenge.

In the Q&A round that followed, Dr Hari Bansh Jha questioned Mr Singh on the way ahead for technological upgradation without

hampering the job market; Mr Singh's reply was that technology should not be seen as a threat but an opportunity and to be able to align new skills with the opportunities that were coming up. Further, there were discussions on India's labour laws and labour reforms, India's investment strategy abroad and the introduction of Goods and Service Tax in India.

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Ong called India to be the anchor of the region and said that "We need India to grow for the region to grow". He went on to quote Harvard's Atlas of Economic Complexity report which said that Indian Ocean basin was the hottest spot on the planet where economic growth was expected to be the highest in the coming decade, with a leading role for India.



Workshop Session 4: Culture

The workshop session on Culture was chaired by **Dr Patrick French**, renowned Writer, Biographer and Historian. In the panel were **Dr S Kalyanaraman**, Co-Director, Saraswati Research Center, **Mr Tissa Jayatilaka**, Executive Director of the Sri Lanka Fulbright Commission, **Ms Moe Thuzar**, Fellow Lead Researcher (Socio-Cultural Affairs), ASEAN studies centre, ISEAS and **Mr Kwa Chong Guan**, Senior Fellow, RSIS.

The chair **Dr French** quoted evidences from history to highlight the historical relevance of the region. He was followed by Mr Kwa Chong Guan who described how the Indian Ocean was once part of the ancient maritime Silk Road. He noted that the centres of power and politics have been present from the 1st century onwards on the Indian Subcontinent

and Southeast Asia, resulting in the adoption of the Sanskrit language and the formation of a "Sanskrit Cosmopolis".

Mr Tissa Jayatilaka spoke on the significance of art and culture in shaping the history of the Indian Ocean Region. He said that culture can play a role in the re-imagination of the IOR and went on to talk about the three phases of the history of the region: pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. He concluded by proposing that "We should also seek to breathe new life and revitalised energy into institutions such as IOR-ARC and even SAARC and ASEAN so as to create a new diplomacy based on our history and civilizational bonds, improving connectivity within IOR and rebuilding people to people links which are crucial for our common future prosperity".

Ms Moe Thuzar focussed her address on the importance of connectivity amongst the countries of the Indian Ocean Region. She highlighted three areas of people-to-people connectivity: Tourism, Education and Culture. During the course of her address she made references to Mekong-India Economic corridor, ASEAN-India engagement, and regional under-exploitation of cultural connections.



Inaugural Session and Welcome Dinner

Delivering the welcome address **Mr M J Akbar**, Minister of State for External Affairs of India, defined oceans to be the “most powerful and creative force , a gift of nature and a source of prosperity”. Talking about the geographical position of India in the middle of the Indian Ocean, Mr Akbar called India the western frontier of peace and the eastern frontier of war. He concluded by saying that India's policy objectives were transparent and that India seeks measures that would facilitate the natural flow of peaceful interactions and consequent growth through cooperation.

Addressing the gathering via video link, **Minister of External Affairs of India Smt. Sushma Swaraj** focussed on the significance of the Ocean in the history of ancient trade routes, cultural linkages and common heritage. She reiterated India's commitment of working with its littoral neighbours to fully develop the blue economy, and of working with IORA for sustainable growth and development. **Dr Vivian Balakrishnan**, Foreign Minister of Singapore spoke about the Indian Ocean being a conduit of cultural exchange and trade historically. He spoke about the common history of colonialism that all the countries of the region had shared and how in the last seventy years shackles of colonialism had been broken. He then went on to talk about the future of the region over fifty years.

In his address, **Mr Nitin Gadkari**, Minister of Road, Transport and Highways of India, spelled the Modi Government's policy on port development and revival to link coastal and island territories. He elaborated on the objectives of Sagarmala Project and briefly touched upon the Special purpose Vehicle on maritime projects overseas, India's coastal shipping agreement with Bangladesh and about developing the Chabahar port in Iran. He concluded by saying “India is committed to use its capabilities and central location in the region to ensure a safe, secure and stable Indian Ocean Region that takes us all to the shore of prosperity”.

Delivering the Inaugural Address of the Conference, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka **H.E. Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe** spoke about the balance of power shifting towards Asia and the reduction of western dominance in the

global markets. He traced this transition in global power to the economic awakening of China and other ASEAN countries. He had also briefly touched upon the cultural diversity of Asia and quoted political scientist Francis Fukuyama in describing the multi polarity of the region. He noted that Indian Ocean had emerged as one of the world's busiest and most critical trade corridors surpassing the Pacific and Atlantic oceans.

He concluded by proposing the establishment of an Indian Ocean Assembly. “An Assembly which will bring together inter alia Heads of State and Governments, leaders of political parties, officials, academics, intellectuals, non-governmental sectors, cultural and commercial leaders, media representatives and youth groups in order to recommend measures for consideration by the Indian Ocean Region”.



Day 2: Conference Keynote Session

The Conference Keynote Session was chaired by **Dr Đặng Đình Quý**, Deputy Foreign Minister of Vietnam with **Dr S Jaishankar**, Foreign Secretary, Government of India delivering the Conference Keynote Address.

In his remarks, **Dr Đặng** highlighted the strategic importance of the ocean's geographical location and how the peace, stability and prosperity of the world were dependent on the peace, stability and prosperity of the region. He co-related the development of ASEAN with IOR and expressed optimism about the consolidation and development of relations with IOR as a component in the ASEAN member state's development strategy. He reaffirmed Vietnam's pledge to play a role in the maintenance of peace and stability in the region with the countries in IOR.

Dr S Jaishankar in his address said that India supported freedom of navigation and overflight, and unimpeded commerce, based on the principles of international law, as reflected notably in the UNCLOS. He further added “As a State Party to the UNCLOS, India urges all parties to show utmost respect for the UNCLOS, which establishes the international legal order of the seas and oceans”. He then drew the attention of the audience to Project Mausam and said that “The very nomenclature based on the distinctive wind system of the Indian Ocean

signifies our interest in the characteristics of the region. The project promotes archaeological and historical research on cultural, commercial and religious interactions. It has become a vehicle for knowledge exchanges, networking and publications”.



In the Q&A round that followed both Dr Đặng and Dr Jaishankar answered questions on the role of regional groupings like ASEAN, reconciliation and revival of littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region and the future of IORA.



Plenary 1: Comity

The first plenary session of the Conference on Comity was chaired by **Mr Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali**, Foreign Minister of Bangladesh; the Keynote address of the session was delivered by **Mr Maumoon Abdul Gayoom**, Former President of Maldives. The panel of speakers comprised **Mr Nobuo Kishi**, State Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan and **Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed**, Deputy Minister of Home Affairs of Malaysia.

Delivering his introductory remarks the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh said that 66% of the world's oil shipments, 33% of its bulk cargo and 50% of the world's container traffic passes through the waters of the Indian Ocean, thus making it the most prominent global economic highway. He spoke about the growing interests among countries in developing new infrastructures in the Indian Ocean.

The keynote speaker of the session **Mr Maumoon Abdul Gayoom** presented Maldives's perspective and spoke of the island nation's co-existence with other littoral states of the region. He called the ocean a faithful provider and protector of the nationals of Maldives and how the nation was dependent on the waters of this ocean for trade and sustenance. He expressed his concern about the rapid pace of climate change which had put the life of the nationals of the island nations in danger. He concluded by saying that “Work must be done to ensure



domestic stability in our countries and democratic values must be instilled in our societies”.

Mr Nobuo Kishi in his address said that “The key of the stability and prosperity of the international community is the dynamism created by the synergy between the “two continents” — Asia, which is recording remarkable growth, and Africa, which is full with potentials — and two free and open seas – the Pacific and the Indian Oceans”. He expressed hope about the full and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and the early establishment of a code of conduct in the South China Sea (COC). He reaffirmed Japan's role in putting up a fight against the challenges of piracy in the region.

Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed said that Indian Ocean had played an important role in the formation of his nation 'Malaysia' as historically most of the rulers had used these waters to set foot on the land of Malaysia. He made references to the role of Malaysia and coming together of the littoral nations during times of crisis like the search of missing MH370 or the Tsunami of 2004 which had brought life to a standstill. He reassured that the Indian Ocean would continue to be a factor in the security policies of his nation.

In his concluding remarks **Mr Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali**, summarised the session in six points. He noted that the centre of gravity had shifted towards Asia and that International Relations were in a state of dynamic transition. Secondly, he said that strategic equations in the Indian Ocean were increasingly becoming complex with major powers competing amongst each other for more prominence and visibility. He then went on to talk about adequately managing the maritime borders to harness the potential of the ocean and the importance of maritime security in enhancing trade and economic cooperation. He concluded by making brief remarks on the issues of climate change, utilization of the oceanic resources and the need to maintain ocean health by striking a balance between conservation, exploitation and utilisation of marine resources.

Plenary 2: Comity

The second plenary on the theme of Comity was chaired by **Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri**. The panel of speakers comprised Rear **Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh**, Assistant Chief of Naval Staff, India and **Rear Admiral Donald Gabrielson**, Commander, Logistics Group Western Pacific, USA.

Delivering the chair's address **Ambassador Puri** said that climate change was a serious threat to existence. He advocated greater collaboration in trade, tourism, infrastructure, marine science and technology and protection of marine environment for the overall development of blue economy. He

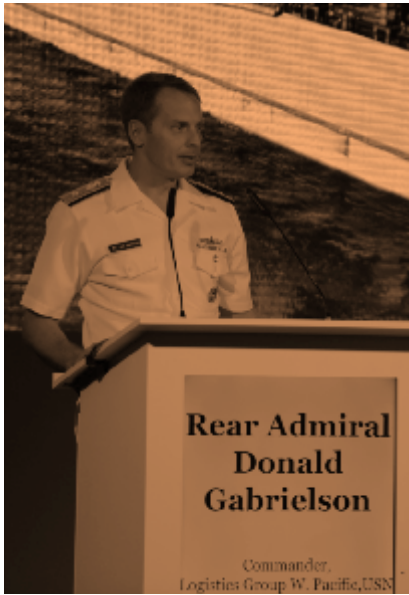


called for concerted actions and greater collaboration to fight climate change. He called IORA an important instrument in pursuing our vision of a sustainable and prosperous future of the region.

In his presentation, **Rear Admiral Singh** said that this ocean as a whole had been a benign medium which had fostered cultural, commercial, linguistic and religious linkages and progress. The region was also the prime facilitator of regional economic growth and prosperity. He then went on to elaborate on Prime Minister Modi's vision behind project SAGAR and concluded by calling the 21st century to be the century of seas.

In his remarks **Rear Admiral Gabrielson** spoke about the impact of climate change on the region and its impact thereafter. He went on to talk about the significance of Naval Cooperation exercises with reference to national and international security and the need for the littoral nations of the region to work together. He also spoke on the importance of the stability of the Indo-Pacific region and the vitality of the safety of sea lanes for the USA.

In the Q&A round that followed, both speakers answered questions on the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 and on the code of conduct of the navies of the region.



Plenary 3: Commerce

The third session of the day was on the theme of Commerce and was chaired by **Mr M J Akbar**, Minister of State for External Affairs of India accompanied by a panel of speakers comprising **Dr Hung-Mao Tien**, Chairman of the Board, Institute for National Policy Research of Taiwan, **Ms Nisha Biswal**, Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, US Department of State and **Mr Baijayant 'Jay' Panda**, Member of Parliament of India.

In his opening remarks, **Mr Akbar** touched upon the historical aspects of trade of the Indian Ocean Region. Taking the cue further, Dr Tien spoke on the trade and security related aspects of the Indian Ocean Region.

In her intervention, **Ms Biswal** stated that the United States supported greater economic connectivity in the Indian Ocean Region not only in terms of its commercial interests but also because the United States was aware that prosperity was linked to security and stability. She further spoke on the importance of economic connectivity in determining the region's success and expressed hope that the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor would be a success. She concluded by saying that "We'll continue to strengthen and expand our work to promote regional connectivity in the Indo-Pacific, and we believe that it can create fair, broad, and sustainable growth, underpinning the region's prosperity, security and stability".

Delivering his address **Mr Jay Panda** said that re-engagement with Indian Ocean Region was necessary for India to rise from being a low-middle income country to a middle income country. He further spoke on the improving indices in terms of ease of doing business, competitiveness, innovation and FDI. Terming the passage of the GST Bill to be bigger than the 1991 reforms, he concluded by saying that "India will work to ensure a safe, secure and stable Indian Ocean Region that delivers us all to the shores of prosperity and India will help strengthen regional mechanisms in combating terrorism, piracy and respond to natural disasters".



Plenary 4 –Culture

The final plenary of IOC 2016 was on the theme of Culture and was chaired by **Shri Lokesh Chandra**, Chairman, Indian Council for Cultural Relations. The panel saw participation from 5 countries in the region with **Mr Vira Rojpojchanarat** (Hon'ble Minister for Culture, Thailand) delivering the Keynote Address. **Mr S B Navinna** (Minister of Internal Affairs, Wayamba Development and Cultural Affairs, Sri Lanka), **Dr. Shashi Tharoor** (Former Minister of State, External Affairs, India), **Mr Santaram Baboo** (Minister of Arts and Culture, Mauritius) and **Mr A. Kohilan Pillay** (Former Deputy Foreign Minister, Malaysia) were the speakers for the session.

Mr R Vira highlighted India's linguistic and cultural contribution to Southeast Asian people. Through examples from Buddhist art, interpretation of the Ramayana, cuisine, costumes, commerce and royal ceremonies he explained how Indic philosophy, beliefs and religions (especially Buddhism and Hinduism) had become the basis of many Southeast Asian cultural expressions. He emphasized that "Indianisation process" in Southeast Asia was not through force, imposition, or colonisation. Rather, 'Indian influences' offered inspirations to the local population and were thus selected and adapted to suit the local contexts of pre-existing and well-developed cultural bases in the sub-region. He ended by reaffirming his commitment to strengthen and further enhance cultural relations with India and



celebrate the shared heritage.

Dr. Tharoor reiterated the role of individual traders, travellers and teachers in exporting Indian-ness to South-east Asia and importing South-east Asian culture into India throughout colonial times. Long before modern governments initiated the "Look East" policy, Dr. Tharoor explained that Indian peninsular kingdoms treated Simhapura (modern-day Singapore) with special attention given its strategic location on India-China trade route. He underlined that India has become far less important to the countries that still bear the stamp of "Indic" influence. He called for pouring far more resources into India's cultural



diplomacy, to project the richness of our composite culture into lands that already have a predisposition for it. Quoting Joseph Nye, he said that in the information age the side which has the better story wins and he underlined that India must remain the "land of the better story."

Mr Baboo said that a common oceanic culture was created in Indian Ocean Region through transnational deployment of human beings across the region from India. The cultural component of the goods traded by merchants was value-addition as well as profit-making and the role of the merchant as cultural broker enabled engagement and plurality. He gave several examples of

tangible and intangible cultural heritage from Mauritius and mentioned that his government was keen to have Bhojpuri Geet Gawai on list of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. He also highlighted several initiatives his ministry was taking to improve the economic well-being of artists and creative workers in Mauritius. Finally, he said that Indian Ocean needed a geo-cultural strategy that could integrate culture with development to improve the quality of lives of people.

Mr Navinna spoke about the importance of platforms like IOC to educate Indian Ocean countries about each other's cultural heritage and to use this knowledge to create a shared identity for the region. He highlighted that Indian Ocean has been a treasure house of tangible and intangible cultural heritage since time immemorial which attracted foreigners. Culture informs trade and strategic outlook of countries and it was important that culture gets centre-stage once again to promote regional well-being. He ended by saying that the primary challenge for people in this region was to safeguard their unique cultural traits while opening up to the world.

Mr Pillay started by reminding the audience that South Asia got a head-start because it was home to one of the oldest civilisations in the world. Hinduism and Buddhism created a common linkage in the region to promote

trading and cultural exchange. While Western colonial powers brought development to this region, they also gave us their philosophy and culture. He then spoke about the deep bilateral relations between Malaysia and India. Culture has played an important role in cementing this relationship with PM Modi inaugurating the Torana Gate in Kuala Lumpur's Little India project. The world, according to Mr Pillay, would be a more peaceful place if every nation could leverage its soft power to find a common ground.

In his Chairman remarks, **Prof. Lokesh Chandra** narrated the influence of Indian culture through its export of cotton to Roman Empire. He said that there were goods (which were also cultural artefacts) that were India's contribution to global culture: cotton, sugar and vegetable oil. The Indian Ocean had inherited cultural institutions from all parts of the world including Europe in the last two centuries and so sharing of ideas was intrinsic to people and societies in the region. The energization of Indian Ocean region started with the whole process of civilisation, acculturation, commercialisation, creation of languages and scripts. Indian Ocean Region provides a template for how other regions of the world would also be shaped in the future to create a major human revolution.



Valedictory Session



The Valedictory Session of the Conference was chaired by former Foreign Secretary of India **Amb Kanwal Sibal** with the Valedictory Address being delivered by His Holiness **Sri Sri Ravi Shankar**, Founder, Art of Living Foundation.

Delivering the Valedictory Address of the 2-Day Conference, H.H. **Sri Sri Ravishankar** appreciated the idea of confluence of Culture and Commerce at this point in time when both of them were moving in opposite directions. He said that while our Culture was moving eastwards, commerce was towards the west. He highlighted the importance of 'education of peace' for a prosperous and happy world and further termed the Indian Ocean Region to be an example of culture of peace. He further went on to talk about the significance of dialogue in being able to reconcile the existing situation of turmoil. He concluded by expressing hope that there would be a wave of happiness in the region as the ultimate goal of Comity, Commerce and Culture was to achieve happiness.

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