

## NEWS

### MARITIME CULTURES AND TRADITIONS OF THE BAY OF BENGAL – A REPORT \*

An international seminar on Maritime Cultures and Traditions of the Bay of Bengal was organized by the Society for Indian Ocean Studies (SIOS), New Delhi at the auspices of Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murti House, New Delhi during April 22-23, 2011. The SIOS was founded by Late professor Nurul Hasan, then Governor of West Bengal and Shri P N Haksar to create awareness and understanding of the Indian Ocean and of its resource potential related to strategic, scientific technical, social and economic aspects for the growth of the country.

The seminar was inaugurated with the welcome address by Professor (Ms.) Himanshu Prabha Ray, JNU. Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Chairman, Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi highlighted the importance of the theme. In his opening remarks, Professor Bhattacharya spoke about the pre-archival imagination of the Indian people's navigational activities, nationalists' perceptions of it and how the colonial masters changed it into territoriality.

Professor Satish Chandra, Former Chairman, UGC, New Delhi delivered the inaugural address. Professor Chandra while appreciating Professor Bhattacharya's observation, emphasized how despite the territorial bindings the Indians continued interacting with each other cultures which flourished further.

The seminar attracted a large number of distinguished scholars learned speakers and young researchers from history, culture and science & technology streams besides experts from naval department.

The session was held in five panels along with a valedictory session. The details of the presentations are as follows:

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\* By **Shabnam Shukla**, Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi

**Session I: Movement across the Bay of Bengal – Pre-Colonial Sri Lanka & Tamil Nadu: Chair – Professor S Bhattacharya**

Professor S J Stephen, Viswa Bharati University: Interaction between the Sailing Communities, Changes and Continuities in the Navigable Routes and the Voyages across the Bay of Bengal

Dr. Umakant Mishra, Ravenshaw University, Cuttack: Mandalas, Sacred Landscapes and continued Buddhist Connections between India and Java in 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD

Dr. Farish Ahmad-Noor, NTU, Singapore: Historical Links between India and Java from the 8<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present

**Session II: Movement across the Bay of Bengal – Colonial and Post Colonial: Chair – Professor Sushil Chaudhury**

Tom Hoogervorst, University of Oxford, London: Anthropogenic Plant Translocation as an early Indicator of Cultural Contact in the Indian Ocean Region

Professor Himanshu Prabha Ray, JNU, New Delhi: Voyages of Discovery beyond Colonial History in the Bay of Bengal

**Session III: Movement across the Bay of Bengal: Chair – Professor S J Stephen**

Charlotte Minh Ha PHAM, Vietnam Scholar: The Viet Coastline, a Maritime Cultural Landscape

Mr. S Muthiah, Chennai: On the Chettiyar Trai

**Session IV: Navigational Traditions of the Bay of Bengal: Chair – Professor Himanshu Prabha Ray**

Dr. Cynthia Chou, Singapore: The Sea Nomads

Dr. Pius M.C., JNU, New Delhi: Trade, Religion and Politics: A Study Meanings of Portuguese activities in the Northern Zones of Bengal 1632-1840

Professor Baladas Ghoshal: Adventurous Traders and Religious Preachers in the process of Globalization in the Bay of Bengal

**Session V: Navigational Traditions reflected in Society and Culture: Chair  
– Professor Baladas Ghoshal**

Mr. Murari Kumar Jha, University of Leiden, The Netherlands: Gangascape and the Rhythms of Navigation in the Ganges – the early Modern Period

Professor Rajat Datta, JNU, New Delhi: The Maritime significance of Local networks of circulation in early modern Bengal

**Valedictory Session**

**Chair:** Professor Mridula Mukherjee, Director, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Murthi House, New Delhi

Professor Sushil Chaudhary spoke on maritime activities particularly in relation to science and technology applied in navigational pursuits during the early days.

The session ended with a Vote of Thanks by Vice Admiral M K Roy, who thanked the distinguished speakers and scholars.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Applications for INSA Projects in History of Science

The Indian National Commission for History of Science approves Research projects annually on the subjects pertaining to History of Science and Technology under the guidance of a Research Council. Through this programme an investigator can take up source and theme oriented studies, compile important scientific and technical works and make translation & critical assessment in proper historical perspective.

#### Facilities

The Projects Investigators are offered facilities of Research Assistants (Non –NET), JRF/SRF, Research Associates with suitable contingency and travel grant. In special cases superannuated scholars are also granted Honorarium with other facilities for whole time research work. **30<sup>th</sup> December** is the last date for submitting the project application form.

**Contact Point:** Executive Secretary, Indian National Science Academy, Bahadur Shah Jafar Marg, New Delhi-110002; e-mail at [esoffice@insa.nic.in](mailto:esoffice@insa.nic.in) or [ijhs@insa.nic.in](mailto:ijhs@insa.nic.in) for further details. The application form can also be downloaded from the INSA Website: [WWW.insaindia.org](http://WWW.insaindia.org).

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### New Publication of INSA

*Fathullah Shirazi, A sixteenth century Indian scientist* by MA Alvi and A Rahman — revised and reprinted edition is just released. It is an important source material for medieval Indian history covering inventions like machines for cleaning gun barrel, wagon mill, travelling bath, and other areas like Illahi era. It also includes an important note on Fathullah's contribution to science and technology by Dr. IshratAlam.

**Price:** Rs.200/- ; US \$ 60/- (inclusive of postage). For further details the scholars are requested to contact the Academy at email: [ijhs@insa.nic.in](mailto:ijhs@insa.nic.in).