

Goa's maritime domain deserves substantive attention : Admiral Arun Prakash

Wednesday, 8th June 2016

“Goa needs to do much more in the maritime domain. With a 100 km long coast, a deep water port, vibrant ship building industry, navigable rivers and a tourist trade graced by sea and beaches, Goa's maritime affairs deserves more substantive attention. Goa needs to create a maritime board, just as Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have done; this will help the state to coordinate all maritime activities” suggested Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd.) PVSM, AVSM, AvC, VSM; former Chief of Naval Staff during inaugural lecture of Goa Maritime Dialogues, a series of interactive discussions initiated jointly by The International Centre Goa (ICG) in association with BITS Pilani (Goa Campus) and Indian Council for Social Sciences Research (ICSSR). The programme included distinguished lectures on ‘Naval Power: Dynamics and Transformation in the Indian Ocean’ by Prof. W. Lawrence S. Prabhakar (Associate Professor, Madras Christian College, Chennai and ‘India's Maritime Agenda 2020: Cruising Through Make in India Promises’ by Prof. R P Pradhan (Associate Professor, BITS Pilani (Goa Campus)).

Prof. W. L. S. Prabhakar examined the geographical, social, cultural linkages that the Indian Ocean has with the adjoining regions and the Pacific. He explained “ through the ages, there is a persistent theme that oceans are seamless in terms exchange of trade and cultural values and any aspect of naval power, does have a geo-spatial context because geo-politics, geo-strategy and geo-economics matter. The dominant ancient civilizations of India and China had their economic and strategic powers premised on maritime naval power and trade. These ancient asian civilisational powers reigned until the 16th century, then due to internal turbulence there was a power shift to the hinterland and the maritime interests of these two powers declined. This shift lead to the rise of colonial European powers such as Portuguese, Dutch, French and British to gain a dominance in the Indian Ocean region”.

In the present day there is a power play among regional powers of India and Pakistan; and extra-regional powers such as the United States and Japan. To regain dominance in the region, India needs to have a strategic maritime vision and needs to emphasize on indigenous research, development, naval technology and production. Also it is essential to develop India's blue economy that will add immense value to its resource and economic strengths, he concluded.

Prof. R P Pradhan highlighted Government of India's Maritime Agenda 2020. He described, “adopted in 2010, fifty-four broad agenda items spread in the areas of shipping, ports modernisation and maritime development for the decade; have to be achieved. India's Maritime Agenda proposes Rs.4.43 lakh crore investment; out of which Rs.1.2 lakh crore of investments are proposed for the shipping industry. India ranks 18th in the world of shipping economy and 7th in Asia. India has a tremendous advantage over other countries in the labour sector, but yet currently faces a severe shortage of well-trained, skilled workers. India has allowed 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the shipping sector since 1997. However in the past 7 years, 9 shipping companies have moved out of India to Singapore, Mauritius & Dubai. Only one foreign owner, Malaysia based AET currently operates. There is no significant FDI and this is another huge challenge.

In last two years there seems to be some momentum in the area, with its Make in India initiative, the government has shown it's seriousness in this matter. Four years to 2020, if things are set right, India will have a robust and vibrant maritime economy, he concluded.

ENDS

For further information about ICG programmes, log onto: www.internationalcentregoa.com