

# CSIR- NEWS BRIEF

August 2023

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The CSIR Newsletter is the compilation of news of international affairs collected from different sources. It also includes opinions and brief news analysis. The CSIR team expresses its gratitude to all sources of information that helped compile the news and generate opinions on the subject.

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# Opinion

## India-Greece Cultural Relations

Rajiv Nayan\*

In August 2023, India's Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, paid a visit to Greece, resulting in a joint statement released on August 25th. This statement pledged to elevate the bilateral relationship to a strategic level, encompassing various areas, including security, the economy, and culture, which are all highly relevant in today's world. While security and economic cooperation may appear to be driving factors in advancing this relationship, the common cultural ties provide a robust foundation for a lasting connection. This could potentially set a new precedent for India's relationships with other European nations and Central Asian Republics.

The brief joint statement mentioned culture only briefly, without further elaboration. In a different context, the statement acknowledged India and Greece as 'two ancient sea-faring nations with a long-standing maritime outlook,' highlighting their historical links. Interestingly, Western and Western-influenced Indian literature shed light on Greek influences on India, particularly through the dominant Gandhar school of art. While the Gandhar school of art and Greek presence in India are recognized, India's influence is sometimes downplayed in literature discussing the India-Greece cultural relationship.

Exploring deeper cultural interactions between the two countries could offer a fresh perspective on India's cultural connections with Europe, Central Asia, the Western world, and East Asia. The study of Greek literature related to India may reveal extensive cultural exchanges between these civilizations. Several books underscore the use of different Indian and Greek words to describe the same concepts. For instance, the Macedonian term 'basileus' and the Indian term 'maharajah' both refer to a king in the same manuscript.

Examining such manuscripts could provide new insights into this relationship. Some writings depict Buddhist dialogues, with 'Questions of Milinda' being a prominent example, shedding light on the spread of Buddhism in Greece and Europe. Notably, figures like Subhūti, the son of Nārada, are known as 'Sophyros,' and Nārada himself becomes 'Naratos' in the Hellenized version.

Recognition of Indian influence on prominent Greek works, including the Hippocratic corpus, Natural Histories, Geographika, and Periplus Maris Erythraei, is gradually increasing among Western scholars. Linguists have identified Greek words derived from Indian origins, further highlighting the exchange of goods, ideas, and culture between the two civilizations. It is imperative to revisit these works and explore the different routes through which Indian influences reached Greece.

Several Greek personalities, such as Megasthenes and Menander I (a king who embraced Buddhism), have strong ties with India. A thorough examination of inscriptions, gold coins, rock edicts, and other artefacts jointly commissioned or sponsored by India and Greece is necessary to fully grasp the depth of their cultural bond. Both Indian and Greek governments should consider establishing centres or chairs in honour of Demetrios Galanos, a Greek Sanskrit scholar who resided in Varanasi in the early nineteenth century. Galanos made significant contributions to the India-Greece cultural relationship by translating Sanskrit works like the Bhagvat Gita and Niti Sataka. Approximately twenty of his manuscripts can be found at the National Library of Greece in Athens.

**\*Dr. Rajiv Nayan** is Senior Research Associate at Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Delhi. The views and opinion expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CSIR.

## A Bird's eye View of India-Uganda Relations

Gaytri Dixit\*

Between April 10 and April 15, 2023, India's Foreign Minister, S. Jaishankar, embarked on a diplomatic trip to Mozambique and Uganda, underscoring India's commitment to strengthening ties with key African allies. During the visit, Jaishankar highlighted Uganda as a significant partner, observing a heightened level of engagement between New Delhi and Kampala. He emphasised India's focus on bolstering economic connections while acknowledging the deep-rooted cultural and economic bonds between the Indian community, comprising around 30,000 individuals and Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), and Uganda. These ties span multiple sectors, including manufacturing, trade, banking, tourism, and technology, significantly impacting Uganda's economy.

Over the past two decades, PIOs and NRIs have invested approximately US\$1 billion in Uganda, reflecting a substantial economic relationship. The visit sparked discussions centred on economic development, trade, and cooperation, capitalising on India's robust economic infrastructure, technological advancements, skilled workforce, and vast resources. The historical ties between India and Uganda, dating back to the 19th century with the involvement of Indians in building crucial infrastructure, have laid the foundation for enduring relations. Noteworthy agreements, such as the 1981 Cultural Accord and subsequent accords in 2018, have furthered bilateral cooperation in various domains, including culture, education, public health, and defence. Recent announcements during the visit, including lines of credit for agricultural and infrastructure projects, the establishment of the Mahatma Gandhi Convention and Heritage Centre, and initiatives like the National Forensic Sciences University's overseas campus, signified a pivotal moment in bilateral collaboration.

During his visit, the PM announced two lines of credit for \$64 million in agricultural and dairy output as well as \$141 million in electrical lines and substation buildings. Also, it was stated

that India would build a Mahatma Gandhi Convention and Heritage Centre in Jinja and that Uganda's People's Defence Force would receive extra training at several Indian Army training facilities. Also announced was financial help for the East African Community (EAC), which is currently being presided over by Uganda.

These endeavours were lauded by Jaishankar as a realisation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for an expanded global presence and were hailed as a significant milestone in India-Uganda relations. Jaishankar tweeted that the international footprint was "a personal vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi" and was a source of tremendous satisfaction. The external minister also emphasised that this was a great day for India, Uganda, and the bilateral relationship between the two countries.

Furthermore, the Duty-Free Tariff Preference (DFTP) Programme and thriving trade exchanges have enhanced economic ties, with India exporting items like vehicles, medicinal products, and paper products to Uganda while importing goods such as coffee, spices, wood products, and cocoa from the African nation. Speaking in a podcast on his recently finished trip to Uganda, Foreign Affairs Minister Jaishankar stated, "In terms of the world outlook, India and Uganda have highly converging perspectives that are founded on the solidarity of the south-south cooperation between the two states."

Jaishankar emphasised the alignment of India and Uganda's perspectives, rooted in south-south cooperation, underscoring the shared outlook and the potential for future collaboration in various global forums, including India's efforts to address issues pertinent to the Global South during its G20 presidency.

**\*Dr. Gaytri Dixit** is Assistant Professor at Centre for African Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru university, New Delhi. The views and opinion expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CSIR.

## India-Africa Ancient Trade Linkages

Pratik Kumar Singh\*

Contemporary international politics has been largely dominated by economic engagement. All around the world, governments are engaged in creating spheres of influence that reflect their economic priorities. For most of their histories, this is also true in the case of India and Africa. In the pre-modern era, the coastal areas of east and south Africa and the western and southern coasts of India were important trading stations between the two countries. The geographical proximity and other natural factors (like monsoon, winds, etc.) open up a world of possibilities for the movement of people, traders, materials, ideas, styles, culture, and religion between India and Africa. For at least two thousand years, the Indian Ocean served as a highway for the exchange of goods, ideas, and cultures between the Indian subcontinent and the Horn of Africa. Since ancient times, commerce and trade between the two regions (India and Africa) have been facilitated by the monsoon, which in the western part of the

ocean blows for roughly half the year from the north-east and for half in the opposite direction. So, thousands of years ago, by using the seasonal monsoon winds, Indian traders sailed to the east coast of Africa in search of mangrove poles, elephant tusks, soft-curved ivory, gold, gemstones, etc.

The "Periplus of the Erythraean Sea" or "Guidebook of the Red Sea," written by a Greek author in 60 AD, describes the presence of Indians in Africa since ancient times. It was the Indians who introduced coconut palms to the eastern coast of Africa. The Kingdom of Aksum, ruler of Ptolemaic, had economic ties and cultural linkages with contemporary Indian rulers. The presence of Gujaratis in East Africa was neither unusual nor new; they had been part of African society since ancient times. The Persian Gulf, Gulf of Camby, Cape Guardafui, Swahili Coast, the Periplus, modern Kutch, Kathiawar, Broach or Bharuch, Barbaricum (modern Karachi), Barygaza, Muziris, Korkai, Kaveripattinam, Arikamedu, etc. were the important trading ports between India and Africa in the archaic era. The find of a bronze figure of the Sanga lion from Northern Kenya, a copper coin of Chola King Rajraja III from Kisimani Mafia (Tanzania), a silver coin of an Indian ruler from Mogadishu, and a wooden-made figure of the one-horn rhinoceros (one-horn rhinoceros is only found in India) found from Mapungubwe Gold coins that were prevalent in Sind have been recovered from Kilwa Kisiwani and Zanzibar; glass beads, which appear to have originated at sites such as Arikamedu in South India, were received from East Africa; Manda (an important trading town known for its ivory products) made ivory bangles, which were recovered from Saurashtra and Gujarat. All this historical and archaeological evidence reveals a wider web of relationships between India and Africa since ancient times.

**\*Dr Pratik Kumar Singh** is Assistance Professor at Department of Political Science, Motilal Nehru College (Evening), University of Delhi. The views and opinion expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the CSIR.

### **Encounter Between Nature Worshippers and Islamic Forces in North Africa**

Wasim Ahmad\*

The encounter between nature worshippers and Islamic forces in North Africa is a historical phenomenon that took place during the spread of Islam across the region. This interaction involved clashes of religious beliefs, cultural practices, and political dynamics. The indigenous people of North Africa, particularly in regions like the Maghreb and the Sahara, often practiced forms of animism and nature worship. They revered natural elements such as mountains, rivers, and trees, attributing spiritual significance to them. Their religious practices were closely intertwined with their connection to the land and the environment.

With the expansion of Islam from the Arabian Peninsula across North Africa, Islamic forces encountered these indigenous communities. The early Islamic conquerors brought with them a monotheistic faith that challenged the polytheistic and animistic beliefs of the local populations.

The spread of Islam was not just a religious endeavour but also had political and socio-economic dimensions. The encounter between Islamic forces and nature worshippers led to clashes of religious and cultural beliefs. The concept of monotheism clashed with the polytheistic practices of nature worshippers. Islamic teachings emphasised the worship of Allah and the rejection of all forms of idolatry, which posed a direct challenge to the existing religious practices. As Islamic rule expanded, some nature worshippers gradually converted to Islam due to a variety of reasons, including social pressures, economic incentives, and a genuine interest in the new faith. Over time, a process of syncretism occurred, where elements of indigenous beliefs were sometimes incorporated into Islamic practices. This syncretism varied across different regions and communities.

It had a profound impact on North Africa's cultural environment. Islamic customs and values frequently replaced the suppressed or altered customs and rituals of the past. However, remnants of pre-Islamic traditions persisted in various forms, influencing local cultural practices to varying degrees. It left a lasting impact on the region's religious, cultural, and social fabric. It left a lasting impact on the region's religious, cultural, and social fabric. It contributed to the unique blend of Islamic and indigenous traditions found in North African societies today. Additionally, this historical interaction is a testament to the complex ways in which religious and cultural identities can intersect and evolve over time.

In summary, the encounter between nature worshippers and Islamic forces in North Africa was marked by clashes of religious beliefs and cultural practices. The spread of Islam challenged indigenous animistic and polytheistic traditions, leading to conversions, syncretism, and a transformation of the region's cultural and religious landscape.

\* **M. Wasim Ahmad** teaches political science at Lakshmibai College, University of Delhi. The views and opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of CSIR.

## **FACTS CORNER**

### **The Mission Samudrayaan Explained**

**Amit Kumar**

#### **What is the Samudrayaan Mission?**

In order to undertake manned deep underwater exploration and biodiversity assessments, the Ministry of Earth Sciences has launched an exclusive ocean mission known as the Samudrayaan. With the inauguration of this initiative and the adoption of this technology, India has now joined nations like the USA, Russia, Japan, France, and China. Manned explorations of the deep sea have already been conducted by these nations.

#### **What are the aims and objectives of the mission?**

The mission's primary aim is to explore the deep oceans, which are rich in mineral resources like polymetallic nodules, cobalt-rich manganese crust, and hydrothermal deposits. Additionally, the "Samudrayaan Mission" is a component of the Deep Ocean Mission, a larger initiative that supports the Blue Economy. "Deep-sea mining" is one of the key components of the Blue or Ocean economy, aimed at ensuring the sustainable efficacy of the resources found beneath the ocean, which can sustain the nation's economic growth, enhance livelihoods, generate new employment opportunities, and take care of the ocean's ecosystem.

#### **What is Matsya 6000?**

The National Institute of Ocean Technology's (NIOT) scientists are working on the Samudrayaan, India's first manned mission to explore the deep ocean. The mission's aim is to build the Matsya 6000, a self-propelled manned submersible that can carry three people and a range of scientific instruments and gear for deep ocean research down to a depth of 6000 metres. According to media sources, it is built with the capacity to operate in the deep sea for 12 hours, and in an emergency, it can operate for up to 96 hours. The government of India launched the Matsya-6000 in October 2021 for deep-sea exploration. The submersible is expected to be prepared for trials by the second quarter of 2024.

#### **What is the budget of the project Samudrayaan?**

As per the information given by Union Minister of Earth Sciences (PIB Release), the Cabinet approved the Deep Ocean Mission, with a total estimated cost of Rs. 4077 crores for the two phases of the mission between 2021 and 2026. "The allocated budget so far is Rs.1400 crore, out of which Rs.405.92 crores has already been disbursed and an expenditure of Rs.225.35 crores have been incurred," the PIB release mentioned.

#### **Development history of manned submersibles in the world**

In 1960, the U.S. Navy's research bathyscaphe, Trieste, made history by being the first crewed ship to descend to the 35,800-foot-deep-lowest point on Earth's seafloor, Mariana Trench's Challenger Deep. Globally, there are more unmanned submersibles than manned deep-sea submersibles. As per the Journal of Marine Science and Engineering, only eight—the New Alvin (6500 m) from America, the Nautilus (6000 m) from France, the MIR-1 and MIR-2 (6000 m) from Russia, the Shinkai 6500 (6500 m) from Japan, the Jiaolong (7000 m) from China, the Shenhua Yongshi (4500 m), and the Fendouzhe (11,000 m) from France—can dive to a depth of at least 4500 m (see <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1312/10/7/909>

## India and the World

### **India lodges protest with China over map**

Beijing has released an official "standard map" that designates the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh and the Aksai Chin plateau as official Chinese territory. This news prompted New Delhi to lodge a protest. "We have today lodged a strong protest through diplomatic channels with the Chinese side on the so-called 2023 'standard map' of China that lays claim to India's territory," India's foreign ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi said in a statement on August 29, 2023.

Source: India lodges protest with China over map claiming border territory, Al Jazeera, August 30, 2023 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/30/india-lodges-protest-with-china-over-map-claiming-border-territory>

### **The 4th G20 Culture Group meeting in Varanasi**

On August 2023, Varanasi held the fourth G20 Culture Group (CWG). The delegates from invited countries, G20 member nations, and many international organisations attended the meeting. During the welcoming ceremony at the Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport in Varanasi, artists performed traditional dances like Awadhi, Faruwahi, Dhobiya, Raai, Kaharwa, Kajari, Pai Danda, Dandiya, and Mayur. The delegates were able to immerse themselves in India's rich cultural heritage. The meeting's goal was to produce actionable outcomes while putting culture at the centre of policy-making.

Source: Varanasi accords traditional welcome to foreign delegates for 4th G20 Culture Group meeting, Hindustan Times. August 23, 2023 ,  
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/others/varanasi-hosts-g20-culture-group-meeting-showcasing-india-s-rich-cultural-heritage-and-commitment-to-multilateralism-101692799298089.html>

### **Korea Culture and Tourism Festival 2023 in Gurugram**

Korea Culture and Tourism Festival 2023 took place in Gurugram, India. In addition to celebrating 50 years of cordial diplomatic relations between Korea and India, this joyous occasion strengthened ties between the two countries. The significance of this cross-cultural cooperation was highlighted by the attendance of Roshan M. Thomas, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, and Younggeun Lee, Executive Director of the Korea Tourism Organisation.

Source: Korea Culture and Tourism Festival 2023 kickstarts in Gurugram, Hindustan Times, August 27, 2027, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/lifestyle/festivals/korea-culture-and-tourism-festival-2023-kickstarts-in-gurugram-101693105320035.html>

### **India, Nepal & Bangladesh working on tripartite electricity trade deal in South Asia**

India, Nepal, and Bangladesh are negotiating a tripartite agreement on power trade, whereby Nepal will use India's transmission line to send up to 500 megawatts (MW) of hydropower to Bangladesh. This development has the potential to further increase cross-border electricity trading in South Asia. Additionally, there are plans to build a dedicated transmission line that will link Bangladesh and Nepal through India; these plans are currently being discussed at the official level. For the same, two routes have been determined.

Source: India, Nepal & Bangladesh working on a first-of-its-kind tripartite electricity trade deal in South Asia, business line, August 07, 2023, , <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/india-nepal-bangladesh-working-on-a-first-of-its-kind-tripartite-electricity-trade-deal-in-south-asia/article67168538.ece>

### **Nepal to export 10,000 electricity to India in next 10 years: Prime Minister Prachanda**

On August 18, 2023, Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" announced that his government intends to increase electricity exports to neighbouring India from 450 MW to 10,000 MW over the course of the next ten years, and for the same preliminary bilateral agreement has already been signed by the two countries. Addressing the 38th anniversary of the Nepal Electricity Authority, Prachanda said that Nepal is transforming in the sector of hydropower and it will further create a conducive environment for attracting foreign investment. "Our country is preparing and waiting with keen interest for larger economic transformation through speedy development of hydro-electricity and its maximum internal consumption in the coming decade," he said.

Source: Nepal to export 10,000 MW power to India in next 10 years: Prime Minister Prachanda, moneycontrol, August 18, 2023, <https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/nepal-to-export-10000-mw-power-to-india-in-next-10-years-prime-minister-prachanda-11220321.html>

### **ILO welcomes G20 Culture Ministers' support for decent work goals**

The G20 Culture Ministers' Outcome Document on culture and sustainable development has been welcomed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which also called for the inclusion of decent work goals in current and future cultural policies. The Ministers' final Outcome Document included a number of measures that they emphasised, such as the need for increased collaboration and communication in accordance with global labour standards, the creation of sufficient compensation schemes and comprehensive social security for the industry, and assistance with the shift to the formal economy when it became necessary.

Source: ILO welcomes G20 Culture Ministers' support for decent work goals, ILO in India, 29 August 2023, [https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/info/public/sp/WCMS\\_891754/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/newdelhi/info/public/sp/WCMS_891754/lang--en/index.htm)

### **India lands spacecraft near south pole of moon in historic first**

On August 22, 2023, India made history by being the first nation to land a spacecraft close to the moon's south pole. The historic event was widely celebrated across the nation. "India is on the moon," declared Sreedhara Panicker Somanath, the chair of the Indian Space Research Organisation, as the Vikram lander of the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft made history by landing close to the lunar south pole in a world first for any space programme.

Source: India lands spacecraft near south pole of moon in historic first, The Guardian, August 23, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2023/aug/23/india-chandrayaan-3-moon-landing-mission>

### **India, Greece upgrade ties to strategic partnership**

On August 25, India and Greece upgraded their relations to a strategic partnership and pledged to double two-way trade by 2030 during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to this Mediterranean country, the first by an Indian Premier in four decades. Following his participation in the BRICS Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, PM Narendra Modi at Athens said that both sides will increase their cooperation in the areas of defence, security, infrastructure, agriculture, education, and emerging technologies. Amidst the European Union's (EU) increasing involvement with New Delhi, Greece has been actively promoting the revitalization of its relations with India in recent years.

Source: India, Greece upgrade ties to strategic partnership, aim to double trade by 2030, Hindustan Times, August 25, 2023, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-and-greece-upgrade-relations-to-strategic-partnership-pledge-to-double-trade-by-2030-101692981020187.html>

### **BRICS invites Saudi Arabia, 5 other nations to join bloc**

On August 24, aiming to reshape the global order, the existing BRICS members- Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - announced that it will add six new members starting next year. The BRICS countries agreed at their annual summit at Johannesburg to make Argentina, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates full members from January 1. Congratulating the new members, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "India has always supported the expansion of BRICS. India has always believed that adding new members will strengthen BRICS as an organisation."

Source: BRICS Summit 2023 Highlights: BRICS invites Saudi Arabia, 5 other nation to join bloc, PM Modi congratulates new members, Mint, August 24, 2023

<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/brics-summit-15th-live-in-south-africa-pm-narendra-modi-vladimir-putin-xi-jinping-to-attend-the-summit-11692839413231.html>

### **Google's AI-powered search expands to India and Japan**

Alphabet's Google announced on August 30 that it has added generative artificial intelligence (AI) to its Search tool for users in Japan and India. The feature allows users to respond to prompts with text or visual results, including summaries. The feature was only available in the United States of America. While the feature will be available in Hindi and English in India, Japanese users will be able to use it in their native tongues.

Source: Google introduces generative AI to Search in India, Japan, The Business Standard, August 30, 2023, <https://www.tbsnews.net/tech/google-introduces-generative-ai-search-india-japan-692022>