

NOTES

FOUNDATION DAY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT

The Department of Ocean Development (DOD) celebrated its Foundation Day for the first time on 27th July, 2004, to showcase the technological advances made by the department in last two decades and to create awareness about its initiatives and activities, having national and global importance. DOD was established on July 27, 1981 as an independent department of Government of India to oversee the growing need of scientific and technological development, required for harnessing our vast ocean resources. The other major mandate of the department is to develop relevant policies and practices for conservation and protection of marine environment. Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Honourable President of India, was the Chief Guest at the function.

Addressing a large gathering of scientists, technocrats and school children, the President emphasized the importance of ocean for social, political and economic development of a nation. Outlining the role of science and

technology in nation building, he declared his vision for Ocean Development as 'deployment of marine resources for national development using cutting edge technologies' and then highlighted ten aspects of the national mission for the ocean which need our attention. These include resource mapping in EEZ, claim for extended EEZ, generation of energy, bio-geo-info nanotech quadrant, drugs from ocean, networking of national talents and resources in ocean sector, Antarctic exploration, polymetallic nodules and metals from sea, effect of global warming and industrial waste and underwater tourism. In conclusion he added that technologies developed by other scientific departments need to be integrated and networked for achieving desired results for which constitution of an Empowered Ocean Commission with participation from all constituent ministries/ departments may go a long way in timely realization of ocean missions.

The Honourable Minister for Ocean Development and



Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, President of India with felicitated eminent personalities and other dignitaries on the occasion.

Science and Technology, Shri Kapil Sibal, in his address highlighted the role which technologists have to play in socio-economic development of the country, specially in the rural sector and providing basic amenities such as energy and drinking water. He lauded the steps and efforts made by DOD in developing indigenous technology in marine instrumentation, desalination and socio-economically important potential fisheries zone (PFZ) advisories along with setting up world class research and development infrastructure. The President unveiled the indigenously developed mooring type data buoy and acoustic tide gauge. The cost of indigenised data buoy has been brought down to Rs 20 lakhs per buoy as compared to Rs 60 lakhs for an imported buoy earlier. On this occasion, the department felicitated eminent policy makers, scientists and technocrats, who have made significant contributions in ocean and polar sciences.

Dr. Haish Gupta, Secretary DOD, made an audio-visual presentation on major achievements and landmarks reached by the department in a short span of over two decades of its establishment. India with over 7500 km long coastline, about 2.02 million sq. km of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and with 37% of its population residing in coastal areas, has a long maritime history. It is strategically located in the Indian Ocean, overlooking the major navigational route to East Asian countries. The rich tropical coastal and marine ecosystems provide socio-economic support to a large population including 7 million fishermen. The department, which was entrusted initially with launching of scientific expeditions to Antarctica, has since grown from strength to strength over a period of two decades, providing leadership in the development of cutting edge ocean technology and exploration of our ocean resources including the deep-sea resources.

To achieve its given mandate DOD has established three autonomous institutes —National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai, National Centre for Antarctic

and Ocean Research (NCAOR), Goa and Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad. In addition, it has also established an Integrated Coastal and Marine Area Management (ICMAM) Project Directorate at Chennai and a Centre for Marine Living Resources and Ecology (CMLRE) at Kochi. The Department established Dakshin Gangotri as the first research base in Antarctica in 1983-84. It is presently managing the permanent research base 'Maitri' established in 1988 located more than 10,000 km away from India, in the icy continent. DOD is equipped with two ocean going vessels (*ORV Sagai Kanya* and *FORV Sagai Sampada*) and two coastal research vessels. Some of the other long term research projects undertaken by the DOD are deep sea Poly Metallic Nodule (PMN) Programme, National Data Buoy Programme, Ocean Observation and Information Services, Integrated Coastal and Marine Area Management (ICMAM) and Marine Research and Technology Development (MRTD). It has recently started an ambitious Gas Hydrate Programme.

However, we will need to contribute continuously and substantially to international debates and decisions on issues of security, health of the ocean, role of the ocean in sequestering green house gases, bio invasion, harmful algal blooms and their impact on fisheries and human health, bio piracy, enhancing productivity, mining of gas (methane) hydrates and a host of similar issues. As the necessary information to form policy and action plans must flow from basic research, the Department of Ocean Development will proactively support long term research in ocean and marine sciences and technology.

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