

INDIAN LIGHTHOUSE FESTIVAL, GOA

Session Report



Vanguards of Our Shores: Lighthouses as Testaments of India's Past and Present

The academic session 'Vanguards of Our Shores: Lighthouses as Testaments of India's Past and Present' on September 23, 2023, in Goa, marked the start of India's first Lighthouse Festival, held from September 23 to September 25, 2023. It was organized by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping, and Waterways, the festival aimed to boost tourism by converting lighthouses into tourist attractions through public-private partnerships. It celebrated India's maritime history, highlighted the cultural significance of lighthouses, and explored their potential to enhance coastal tourism.

The panel for this session consisted of distinguished maritime experts:
Prof. Vasant Shinde: Renowned Archaeologist, Former Director General of National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal

Dr. Sunil Gupta: Maritime Archaeologist, Officer on Special Duty at Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya

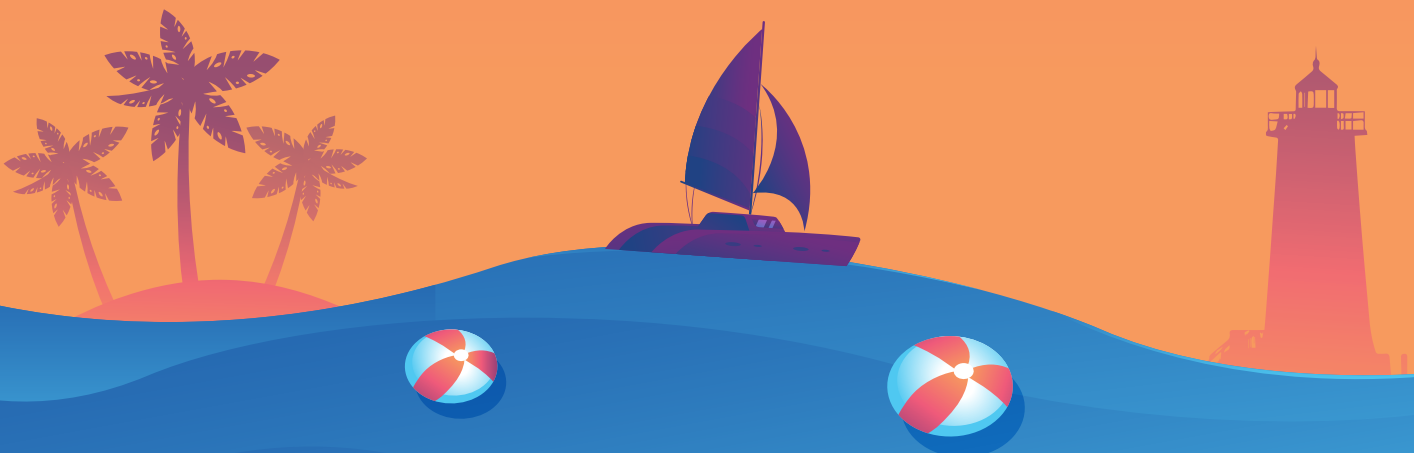
Dr. Vasu Usapkar: Director of the Goa State Museum

Mr. Carlos Noel de Sousa: Managing Director of De Souza Group

Moderator :

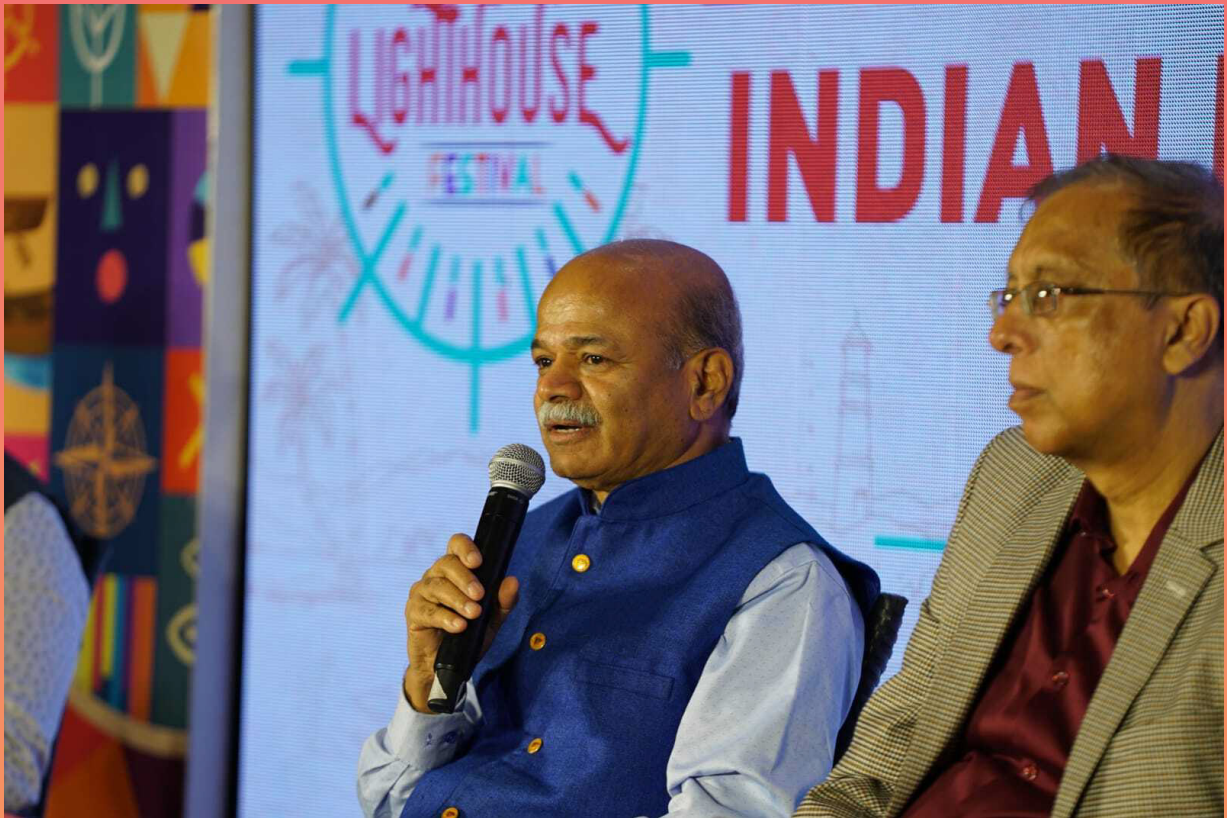
Ms. Heena Goswami: Research Scholar and Editorial Consultant at IGPP

The event attracted a diverse audience, including dignitaries, government officials, scholars, investors, and prominent figures interested in Goa's culture, history, and tourism.





Prof. Vasant Shinde highlighted the vital role of ships and travelers in connecting cultures and exchanging ideas throughout history. He mentioned how shipbuilding and sea travel have roots dating back to the Harappan civilization, supported by archaeological evidence from various Indian sites. Prof. Shinde discussed the idea of developing a lighthouse museum at the National Maritime Heritage Complex in Lothal, aiming to showcase maritime history and ancient lighthouses. He also emphasized the need to educate the public about preserving our historical and cultural heritage.





Dr. Sunil Gupta focused on Indian civilization's expansion into Southeast Asia and the Roman Empire. He discussed trade routes through the Red Sea, India's exports to Rome, and settlements by international merchants in India. Dr. Gupta emphasized coastal regions' importance and the development of cultural bonds with Rome and Southeast Asia, enabling exchanges in culture, language, and art. He also explored links between this history and astrology and religious sentiments, intertwined with maritime history in the region.





Dr. Vasu Usapkar in his remarks talked about how the lighthouses protected the local culture and played a role as a cultural catalyst. He focused on the fact that the heritage of lighthouses could play a crucial role in bringing the public closer to Indian culture and history. He threw light on maritime history, particularly of Goa and the historical boats used earlier and the need to preserve culture through the times.





Mr. Carlos Noel de Sousa, in his address, points out that the lighthouses are now receiving the much-needed attention and are being developed as tourist hubs, globally. He concentrated on India's potential to develop lighthouses as tourist spots and how this initiative will contribute to the nation's economy. He emphasised the role and opportunity for the private players to make this initiative a success. He also gave a glimpse of his childhood memories in relation to Goa's rich history and culture.





Shri Shrawanan, Deputy Director, Directorate General of Lighthouses And Lightships (DGLL), gave a presentation to imprint the rationale behind India's first Lighthouse Festival and the steps taken by the government of India to promote the development of 75 selected lighthouses throughout India to present them as tourist hubs. After the discussion and the presentation, the floor was opened to the public for interaction with the panellists, in which numerous officials such as investors, journalists and influencers took part and shared their hopes relating to the initiative.





At the end, **Prof. Vasant Shinde** gave his concluding remarks and emphasised that with the evidence of new excavations, we know that the Indian civilization can be dated to much earlier than what was thought before. Knowledge and pride in our heritage can provide business opportunities as well and the Lighthouse Heritage Tourism initiative will be a pioneer in showcasing the rich maritime heritage of India.

