

Chennai. The seminar was sponsored by CSIR, DST, New Delhi and ONGC. Dr. M Prithviraj, Director, ESS, DST, New Delhi delivered the keynote address and inaugurated the IAS-2006 and the seminar. Drs. C.S. Jain, Executive Director, ONGC, Chennai and B.D. Bhardwaj, Secretary, IAS were the chief guests. Prof. D. Viswanathan, Vice-Chancellor, Anna University presided over the inaugural function and delivered his address.

Nine invited lectures dealing with Chrono-, Bio- and Magneto-Stratigraphy, Sequence Bio-Stratigraphy and Integrated Stratigraphy of Cretaceous basins of India as well as Dating Techniques, Geochemical Environment and REE studies, Ostracodal forms of Cretaceous and Palynological perceptions were delivered in the one day workshop by well known scientists of ONGC, Chennai; NGRI, Hyderabad; University of Madras and Anna Universities, Chennai and BSIP, Lucknow. About 100 teachers/researchers and students from various Universities and Research Institutes participated in the workshop.

The 23rd Annual Convention of IAS and National Seminar included a session for Young Sedimentologists Award Presentation (YSAP), seven technical sessions and one-day field study. Four young scientists (two from Mangalore University, one each from Vikram University, Ujjain and University of Jammu) were short-listed for YSAP. In all about 60 papers were presented in 7 technical sessions and about 150 teachers/researchers from all over the country including two from UNAM, Mexico participated in the deliberations.

The various aspects dealt in the technical sessions are: (1) provenance, paleo-environment, diagenesis, tectonic setting and evidences for Meso-Neo Proterozoic basins, (2) geochemistry, sources of arsenic in alluvial sediments, metal pollution, trace metal contamination, flood plain sediments, carbon and oxygen isotopes and acid leachable trace metals, (3) sedimentary processes, magnetic granulometry, depositional environment of mud flats and estuarine hydrodynamic conditions, (4) potential sources

of petroleum, distribution of coals, influence of marine environment on coals and composition of coal seams, reservoir/aquifer characteristics with reference to upper Assam and Neyveli Basins, (5) tectonic setting, palynology and sedimentology of Niniyur and Ariyalur Formations, Sedimentological study of Cuddalore Formation and environment of Periyagalur limestone deposits, (6) petrified fossils of Mesozoic, applications of ostracods and foraminifers in Cretaceous basins studies, and (7) beach morpho-dynamics, littoral sediment transport, clay mineralogy, texture of beach sediments and marine cores, distribution of heavy minerals (surface and subsurface), tsunami sediment characteristics and an integrated approach towards their provenance. A special talk on climate and sedimentary processes during late Quaternary in Larsemann Hills, East Antarctica was delivered by Prof. A.C. Narayana (CUSAT).

In the concluding session, Prof. G N Nayak (Goa University) gave his remarks on the technical sessions and highlighted the best presentation of each session. Dr. Bhardwaj, the secretary of IAS announced that Mr. Anish K. Warriar of Mangalore University was selected for the Young Sedimentologists Award.

A field trip was conducted on 9 December to areas near Saluvankkupam and Mahabalipuram, where a number of archaeological features and ancient temples exposed due to erosive activity of 26 December, 2004 tsunami exist. Accumulation of 6-9 inch thick layer of heavy minerals over the pre-tsunami sediments was also noticed during the field trip.

The workshop and convention were organized by the Department of Geology, Anna University. Dr. R. Nagendra was the convener of the programs.

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THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL PALAEOONTOLOGICAL CONGRESS AT BEIJING, CHINA

The Second International Palaeontological Congress (IPC 2006) was held in Peiking University, Beijing, China during 17th to 21st June, 2006. Following the success of the First International Congress (2002, Sydney), the IPC 2006 has attracted a larger group of palaeontologists and scientists of related disciplines from across the world. This congress

was sponsored amongst others by the China Association for Science and Technology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, National Natural Science Foundation of China, International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), International Palaeontological Association, Palaeontological Society of China and Geological Society of China.

The congress was held at Peking University (PKU) in Beijing which is the first national university established in modern Chinese history a hundred years ago. More than 600 delegates attended the congress representing various universities, institutions and organizations all over the world.

Prof. J. William Schopf, invited speaker from University of California, Los Angeles, USA delivered an excellent lecture on "Palaeontological Riches of China: One Visitor's Impression" with a number of slides, at the Congress Banquet on 18th June.

Under the congress theme of *Ancient Life and Modern Approaches* an assemblage of more than 45 titles of special, general, topical symposia and workshops were organized by many active scientists from around the world. The eight Plenary Sessions includes "Closing the gap: Intermediate character suites and lifestyles at the fish-tetrapod transition" by P.E. Ahlberg of Uppsala University, Sweden (PS-1); "Molecular Taphonomy" by D.E.G. Briggs of Yale University, USA (PS-2); "The greening of Earth and its consequences" by Dianne Edwards of Cardiff University, UK (PS-3); "The Cambrian Radiation" by Douglas H. Erwin of Smithsonian Institution, USA (PS-4); "Secrets of Cretaceous flowers unraveled by X-Ray tomography" by E.M. Friis et al. (PS-5); "The end-Permian mass extinction: Progress and perspectives from China" by Shuzhong Shen et al. of China" (PS-6); "Molecular evidence for radical changes in ocean chemistry, globally across the Permian Triassic Boundary" by Roger E. Summons et al. (PS-7); "New discoveries from the Jehol biota: biological and geological implications" by Zhonghe Zhou of China (PS-8).

There were six special sessions under various themes such as Palaeoembryology and developmental biology in Earth history (S1); Geo-biodiversity: taxa, morphology and ecology (S2); The Earthtime project (S3); Evo-devo, palaeontology and evolution (S4); Fossil microbial communities and their geological processes (S5); Past and present global changes and biotic saltations (S-6).

In the General Sessions quite a good numbers of research papers were presented under the broad groups such as Palaeobotany (G1); Microflora (G-2); Invertebrate palaeontology (G-3); Vertebrate palaeontology (G-4); Fossil lagarstatten (G-5); Trace fossil and ichnofacies (G-6); Palaeoecology, palaeobiogeography, palaeogeography and palaeoclimate (G-7); Reef evolution (G-8); Computer analysis of fossil data and morphometrics (G-9); Impact stratigraphy, chemostratigraphy (G-10); High resolution biostratigraphy (G-11); Integrative Stratigraphy (G-12);

Palaeoanthropology (G-13) and Micropalaeontology (G-14).

Twenty six topical symposias included the subthemes as T1 - Earliest evidence of life on Earth; T2 - Neoproterozoic palaeobiology and geobiology; T3 - Cambrian radiations and extinctions; T4 - Ordovician World; temporal and spatial changes in physical and biotic environments; T5 - Middle Palaeozoic vertebrate biogeography, palaeogeography and climate (IGCP 491); T6 - Early vascular plant diversity and environmental interactions; T7 - Devonian land-sea interaction: evolution of ecosystems and climate (IGCP 499); T8 - Late Palaeozoic: the end-Permian extinction following a 100 m. y. long stability; T9 - Triassic marine vertebrates and ecosystem: evolution, migration interaction with invertebrate and palaeoenvironmental-palaeogeographic changes; T10 - Life and environment of Triassic time (IGCP 467); T11 - Triassic-Jurassic boundary events (IGCP 458); T12 - Marine and non-marine Jurassic: biodiversity and ecosystem (IGCP 506); T13 - Reconstructing the Lower Cretaceous terrestrial ecosystem-evidence from the Jehol Biota in China and its lateral equivalents in other areas; T14 - Dawn of the Danian (65-61 Ma) (IGCP522); T15 - Neogene climate and biotic changes in Eastern Eurasia; T16 - Mammals: phylogeny, divergence and biogeography; T17 - The evolutionary history of vent, seep and other chemosynthetic ecosystems; T18 - Ancient molecules and isotope signals: methodology and application; T19- Black smokers and cold seep faunas; T20 - Evolution of the pelagic realm; T21 -Stratigraphy of orogeny belts; T22 - Workshop on Palaeontological education in universities and museums in the 21st Century; T23 - Workshop on Palaeontological Parks-the world-wide conservation of outstanding fossil sites; T24 - Sharing information sources of palaeontology and Stratigraphy; T25 - The past, present and future of palaeontology in China; T26 - Cretaceous biota and KIT boundary in the Heilongjiang River area and its adjacent regions.

An Abstract Volume with a total of 680 abstracts, submitted by participants from over 50 countries has been published under the theme "Ancient Life and Modern Approaches". Qun Yang and Yongdong Wang Nanjing Institute of Geology and Palaeontology, Chinese Academy of Sciences and Elizabeth A. Weldon, China University of Geosciences, Wuhan, edited this huge volume of abstracts. The contributions to this volume highlight new and exciting discoveries, as well as theoretical and methodological advances that have taken place in palaeontological research in the four years since the 1st IPC in Sydney.

Chinese organizers along with their collaborators from other countries had successfully conducted about 10 pre-

mid-, and post congress field excursions, providing an opportunity for international delegates to examine some of the most exciting fossil sites in China, including the fantastically well preserved Neoproterozoic, Palaeozoic and Triassic fossil biota and Stratigraphy in south and southwest China, Palaeozoic and Mesozoic sections in Tibetan Himalayas, terrestrial Mesozoic rocks and fossils in northwestern China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the famous Jehol Biota in northeast China's Liaoning Province and Cenozoic fossil sites in Shaanxi Province and Nei Mongol (Inner Mongolia) Autonomous Region of north China. These carefully selected localities

certainly represent a good sample of Palaeontological and stratigraphic discoveries made by Chinese scientists in recent history.

IPC 2006 greatly facilitated academic exchange among participants from different countries, promoted research collaborations internationally and provided an opportunity for palaeontologists to better know China and its fossil treasures.

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GONDWANALAND EXPEDITION

The Gondwanaland Expedition, organized by a Delhi-based NGO, Bhartiya Yuva Shakti, was a scientific and friendship mission, driving across 17 countries of West Asia and Africa. It started from Simla in India - top of the Himalaya and ended at Cape Agulhas in South Africa – the southernmost tip of Africa. The 10-member team, led by Mr. Akhil Bakshi, included two geologists - Dr. Trilochan Singh and Dr. Rajeev Upadhyay; a zoologist - Dr. Gopinathan Maheswaran; a botanist - Dr. Paramjit Singh; an anthropologist - Dr. A.R.Sankhyan; a medical surgeon - Dr. Rajendra Jain; an automobile engineer - Mr. Sudhir Kashyap; and two film crew - Mr. Rohit Chawla and Mr. Vikramjit Singh Gill. The team drove in three Mahindra & Mahindra's Scorpios, and covered road distance of 24,800 kilometers in 98 days traversing Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland and South Africa.

The objective of the expedition was to conduct exploratory scientific research that will contribute to the knowledge of the continental structure and bring to light evidences of the past history. It also aimed to study the seismic activity in the Indo-African region that causes catastrophic disasters like the recent earthquakes and the tsunamis. Further, it was aimed to study the evolution of flora, fauna and humans in the Gondwanaland region. Another aim was to promote people-to-people contact between India and the countries of West Asia and Africa. Last but not the least, the expedition aimed to promote the UN AIDS campaign of "STOP AIDS. Keep the Promise".

The expedition team visited 30 Universities and R&D Institutions in different countries en route, and interacted

with the academia for exchange of knowledge and experiences. Main theme of discussion included regional as well local geology, structure and tectonics, seismicity, disaster management, etc., in their respective countries. Museums and laboratories were also visited. Wherever possible, short field trips were undertaken jointly with the faculty members. The expedition carried with it a Goodwill Message from the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India addressed to the Heads of State of the countries traversed. The Expedition Members had the unique opportunity to meet various dignitaries in different countries en route, including the Presidents of Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique; the Prime Minister of Syria; Ministers and Governors of various States. To promote people-to-people contact, the expedition interacted with students and faculty in schools and colleges, met with Friendship Societies and NRI associations, visited an orphanage for HIV&AIDS-affected children, and interacted freely with hundreds of thousands of common people en route. The expedition was given extensive coverage by print and electronic media.

The expedition passed through snow-covered mountains, rolling hills, fertile valleys, vast plains and steppes, grasslands, deserts, dense and savanna forests, wildlife sanctuaries and national parks, vast lakes, volcanic craters, coastline, etc. It gave an opportunity to observe various geological and geomorphic features, in the field en route the expedition. It included the active Zagros Mountains and suture zone of the Arabian and Iranian Plates in Iran, Anatolian Mountains and a number of craters in Turkey, famous Dead Sea Basin in Israel, Mid Oceanic Ridge reflecting the Arabian and African Plate boundary, Western Desert in Egypt with a large variety of fossils, Great Rift Valley (4,830 km long extending from Syria to