

Statement

by

Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia

Director General, ICWA

at

Second Sapru House Lecture on

‘China’s Maritime Challenge in the 21st Century’

at

Sapru House, New Delhi

October 30, 2012

We gather here today for what promises to be a stimulating and enjoyable forenoon. The Sapru House Lecture series, launched in August 2012, will have its second edition today. Our distinguished speaker Admiral (ret'd) Arun Prakash, former Navy Chief, will address us shortly on 'China's Maritime Challenge in the 21st Century.'

2. This lecture series is dedicated to all those visionary leaders like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister, Dr. Tej Bahadur Sapru, the first President of ICWA, Dr. H.N. Kunzru, the second President, and Dr. A. Appadorai, the first Secretary General who helped in founding and nurturing ICWA as a key instrument of study, research and public education on foreign policy questions. We also remember and thank all those countless men and women who played a valuable role, through the years, in strengthening ICWA, the only think tank in India enjoying the special status of 'an institution of national importance', bestowed upon it by the Parliament of India. As you know, ICWA will become seventy years old next year.

3. We have chosen today's theme with care and deliberation. It is evident that virtually no contemporary discourse on international politics, economy and security issues can be held today without a reference to China. Today's theme is exclusively focused on that country. You would no doubt notice the timing of the lecture which takes place as many in India reflect on the consequences and lessons of 1962, a watershed year in India-China relations and indeed in the history of independent India. I agree to what Ambassador Shyam Saran wrote recently: 'The 50th anniversary of the 1962 Sino-Indian border conflict should be an occasion to look to the future rather than commiserate about the past.'

4. The last Head of Government who visited Sapru House to deliver a keynote address was Wen Jiabao, Prime Minister of China. He observed on 16 December 2010: 'Our two countries are at a crucial stage of development. We should seize the opportunities and lose no time in expanding and deepening our converging interests and actively advance strategic cooperation and practical cooperation. Only in this way can we speed up development, meet challenges together, share development achievements and usher in a bright future. I believe that China and India have the responsibility and the ability to fulfill this historic mission.'

We hope that this is a vision shared by the present and future leaders of China and they will have the wisdom and courage to translate it into action.

5. We at ICWA have invested heavily in studying and monitoring developments in China. A special project to examine various aspects of the Chinese polity, conducted over the past two years, has now reached a critical stage. We have with us a set of fifteen papers produced by young Indian scholars on China, in consultation with veteran scholars and former diplomats operating under our Core Group on China, chaired by Ambassador C.V. Ranganathan. We intend to place them shortly in the public domain through our website for public education and awareness about current trends in China as seen from an Indian perspective.

6. We are particularly delighted to have as the Chair Ambassador K. Raghunath, former foreign secretary and Chairman of ICWA's Research Committee. He is a respected Sinologist, who served in China during the Cultural Revolution years. He has watched China since then in his various avatars. He served as Head of Mission in Philippines, Nigeria, Bangladesh and, post-retirement, in Russia. He will conduct the proceedings and the interactive session that would follow the lecture.

7. We are exceptionally privileged by the presence of our distinguished speaker who has impressive credentials. On a personal note, I must say how impressed I have been by his writings on strategic issues for the past several years. We may not agree to everything that he says, but we would be well advised to listen to him with due attention. Let me now introduce Admiral (ret'd) Arun Prakash to you.
