Mathematics helped Gujarati merchants dominate the seas

-times news network-
Dahej: Merchants belonging to the Baniya community of Gujarat were able to dominate trade and business across the globe through the seas for a very long period of time thanks to their mathematical strength.

Gujarati merchants had built up a reputation for their visibility, accessibility, transparency, connections and economic practices and their prowess is well-documented by sailors and traders belonging to the 17th century, said professor Rubi Maloni, from the department of history, University of Mumbai, at the symposium on ‘Gujarati merchants in 17th century European records’ here on Saturday.

Another professor, Ranbir Chakravarti, from the centre for historical studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, talked on Indian Ocean on the second day of the symposium aboard the INS Mysoore. "Indian Ocean happens to be the third largest ocean in the world, occupying 20% maritime space on the earth. Around 193 inscriptions of first to fifth centuries discovered from the Hoq Cave of Socotra Island in the Arabian Sea indicate strong trade connections between people living there and Gujarat. Knowledge and information had travelled seamlessly through the Indian Ocean over the years and these are well-documented. Maximum knowledge has come to this part of the world from the West through the Indian Ocean," he said.

The symposium covered a variety of subjects. Dr. Y.S. Rawat of Gujarat Government’s archaeology department spoke on ‘Harappan cities in Gujarat and the overseas’. The subject of professor Makrand Mehta of Gujarat University was ‘Gujarat sufis, saints and the Indian Ocean world in the medieval times.’ Dr. Fernando Rosa of Stellenbosch University, South Africa spoke on ‘scholars and Gujarati-revisiting’ while the focus of Sarah Bancroft, a journalist from the United Kingdom, was ‘notes on sea knowledge’. Dr. Dinyar Patel of University of South Carolina spoke on the subject ‘controlling the narrative: Parsis, European scholarship on Zoroastrianism’ while professor Edward Simpson of SOAS University of London discussed ‘the transnational political philosophy of Shyamji Krishna Verma’.