

Doing an encore, à la Vasco da Gama!

Pretty foreign yachts on sailing expedition to bob on Chowpatty waters till Sunday

BY A STAFF REPORTER

A sailing expedition being held in association with MTDC to promote India as a preferred yachting destination, has just come to the city's shores and the boats have already dropped anchor at Girgaum Chowpatty. And the city is all set to see the first international off-shore Yacht Race on Friday. The boats will be moored at the city's shores till the coming weekend after which they set sail for

Goan shores, with a number of Indian yachts in tow.

It was on the last day of October last year that 35 international sailing yachts of various sizes and from different nations set off from Turkey. India will be the last leg of their voyage! Thirteen of these yachts have already touched Mumbai and have been parked in the waters near the Chowpatty beach.

The event was the brainchild of a group of European yachtsmen,

including a few courageous women who have been in consultation with Gautam Dutta, veteran Indian yachtsman, to sail to India. Says Dutta, "What is exciting for the yachting community in India is that we are going to see some big boats in some big time action at high seas. The foreign yachts will be joined by Indian boats and will be flagged off from Mumbai on Sunday. The race will culminate off the Baina Beach at Vasco city in Goa, in keeping with the spirit of the famous Portuguese seafarer after whom the event has been christened. It will be at the final destination point that the Vasco da Gama Cup 2006 will be awarded on April 29."

Garry Peerless and Ann Swiston own the Toucan Tango, a gorgeous yacht. Though they have been sailing since over three decades, this is their first rally. "This is the only rally we have ever participated in. We joined only because of the safety aspect and travelling to the Yemen coast appealed to us," says Garry.

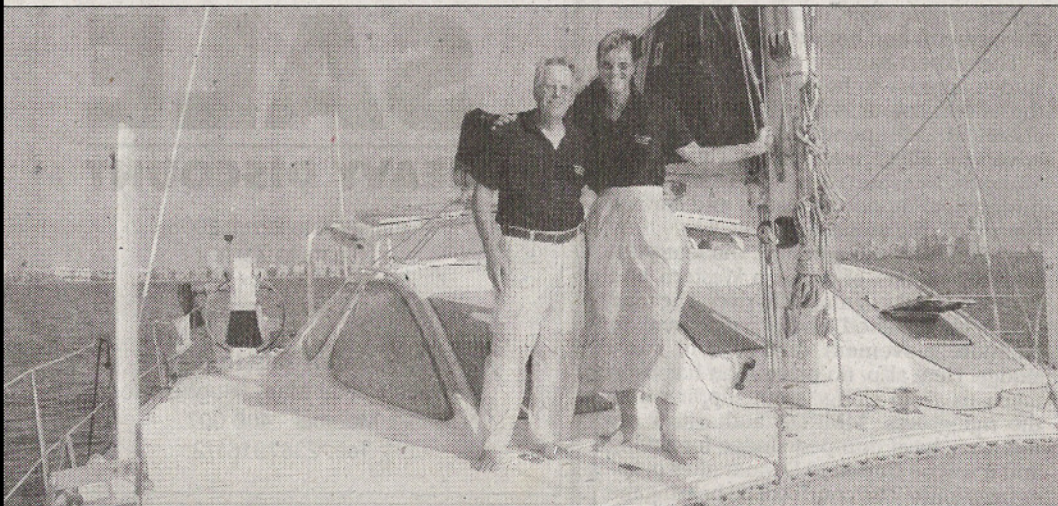
Obstacles on the high seas en route to the destination is part of the game, say sailors. "In the Red Sea there were many obstacles and between the exit of the Red Sea and Oman there is piracy but we didn't face that thankfully. When

we travel as a group it is much safer," says Peerless.

Nature-lovers, the duo love to travel and when they're not sailing, they make it a point to go hiking and sometimes even rent a car and cruise along the country that they are visiting. Ann, on her part, seems to enjoy being in India for the first time, "It's so beautiful here. Anchoring here in the middle of the city, it's the perfect view," she remarked.

What's the significance of the name 'Toucan Tango' given to their yacht? Garry Peerless is quick to reply: "We are required to have a unique name for the boat in order to register with the government. So Toucan Tango was the name we both came up with."

En route to Goa, the sailors will sample the visual pleasure of the splendid Konkan coast, complete with historic forts, islands and virgin beaches. The Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) have thrown in their mite to showcase this golden heritage and have arranged a two-day halt for the yachts at Jaigarh jetty where the participants will be hosted by the Government of Maharashtra and will spend their time there at the Ganapatipule beach resort before sailing for Goa.



The Vasco da Gama 2006 Cup will be presented in Goa on April 29.