

Space photos no proof of Ram Sethu: NASA

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"I am not aware of any carbon dating either," said NASA spokesman Michael Braukus, refuting claims by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that the agency had the Adam's bridge in Palk Strait - known as Ram Sethu in India - carbon dated as being 1.7 million years old.

"Some people have taken pictures by our astronauts to make their claim. No position can be taken on the basis of these photographs in any way," Braukus said when asked to comment on the controversy surrounding the site of the proposed Rs 24 billion Sethusamudram canal project off India's southern tip.

"The age, substratum, geological structure or anthropological status of the ocean bed in Palk strait cannot be determined by the astronauts' photographs. So there is no basis for these claims," Braukus said.

Back in October 2002 too the US agency had rebutted a story circulated by an Indian news agency based on claims made by a couple of NRI websites and Hindu news services that "space images taken by NASA" had revealed "a mysterious ancient bridge in the Palk Strait".

"Remote sensing images or photographs from orbit cannot provide direct information about the origin or age of a chain of islands, and certainly cannot determine whether humans were involved in producing any of the patterns seen," NASA official Mark Hess had said then.

"The mysterious bridge was nothing more than a 30 km long, naturally-occurring chain of sandbanks called Adam's bridge," Hess had added. "NASA had been taking pictures of these shoals for years. Its images had never resulted in any scientific discovery in the area.

"The images reproduced on the websites may well be ours, but their interpretation is certainly not ours," Hess had said, referring to the NRI websites.

Link to NASA Image : <http://history.nasa.gov/SP-168/p193a.jpg>

The report on the Internet that had appeared five years ago had also claimed "archaeological studies reveal that the first signs of human inhabitants in Sri Lanka date back to...about 1.75 million years ago" as does the age of the bridge.