

INDIA PROPOSES TO EXPAND RESEARCH, TOURISM IN THE ARCTIC

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India launched its first scientific expedition to the Arctic in 2007.

India has unveiled a new draft 'Arctic' policy that, among other things, commits to expanding scientific research, "sustainable tourism" and mineral oil and gas exploration in the Arctic region.

The draft policy is open to public comments until January 26 and has been prepared after deliberations among several ministries.

India expects the Goa-based National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research to lead scientific research and act as a nodal body to coordinate among various scientific bodies to promote domestic scientific research capacities by expanding "earth sciences, biological sciences, geosciences, climate change and space related programmes, dove-tailed with Arctic imperatives in Indian Universities."

Other objectives of the policy include "...putting in place Arctic related programmes for mineral/oil and gas exploration in petroleum research institutes and encouraging tourism and hospitality sectors in building specialised capacities and awareness to engage with Arctic enterprises," according to the says the document available online at www.arcticpolicy.nic.in.

"Arctic research will help India's scientific community to study melting rates of the third pole — the Himalayan glaciers, which are endowed with the largest freshwater reserves in the world outside the geographic poles," the document notes.

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