

## India to expand polar research to Arctic as well

Three decades after its first mission to Antarctica, the government is refocusing priorities to the other pole — the Arctic—because of opportunities and challenges posed by climate change.

This month, it has renamed the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR) — since 1998, charged with conducting expeditions to India's base stations to the continent — as the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research.

It's also in talks with Canada and Russia, key countries with presence in the Arctic circle, to establish new observation systems, according to a source. Now, India only has one Arctic observation station near Norway.

"The renaming has been approved," says a July 5 notification by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.

### More expeditions

While annual missions to maintain India's three bases in Antarctica will continue, the new priorities mean that there will be more expeditions and research focus on the other poles, the source said. M. Rajeevan, Secretary, Earth Science Ministry, wasn't available for comment.

Climate change, said the source, person familiar with deliberations, was a decisive factor in India re-thinking priorities. Sea ice at the Arctic has been melting rapidly — the fastest in this century. That means several spots, rich in hydrocarbon reserves, will be more accessible through the year via alternative shipping routes. India is already an observer at the Arctic Council — a forum of countries that decides on managing the region's resources and popular livelihood and, in 2015, set up an underground observatory, called IndARC, at the Kongsfjorden fjord, half way between Norway and the North Pole.

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