

INDIA HOPES TO PUT DOWN ROOTS IN ARCTIC

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Crucial outpost: Scientists in front of Himadri, the Indian research station in the Arctic. Special Arrangement

India aspires to have a permanent presence with more research and satellite ground stations in the Arctic region, suggests a perusal of its Arctic Policy document officially unveiled last week.

India now has a single station, Himadri, in Ny-Alesund, Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago, where research personnel are usually present for 180 days. India is in the process of procuring an ice-breaker research vessel that can navigate the region.

Through its existing satellites, India aspires to capture more detailed images to “assist in the development of the Arctic region”.

Eight nations — Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Russia, Sweden and the United States — make up the Arctic Council. The region is home to about four million, a tenth of them being indigenous tribes. India has had a research base in the region since 2008 and also has two observatories.

Arctic weather influences the Indian monsoon and hence has been of interest to Indian researchers for decades. Climate change and the melting of ice caps imply changes to the Arctic weather. India has sent 13 expeditions to the Arctic since 2007 and runs 23 active science projects.

Nearly 25 institutes and universities are currently involved in Arctic research in India and close to a hundred peer-reviewed papers have been published on Arctic issues since 2007, the Ministry of Science and Technology said in a statement.

India has the status of ‘Observer’ member — 12 other countries have such a status — in the Arctic Council and participates in several meetings that are mostly themed around research. Beyond science, India also expects business opportunities.

“Explore opportunities for responsible exploration of natural resources and minerals in the Arctic... identify opportunities for investment in Arctic infrastructure such as offshore exploration, mining, ports, railways, information technology and airports. It also expects Indian private industry to invest in the establishment and improvement of such infrastructure,” says the document.

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