



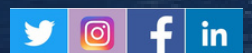
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INDIA'S EVOLVING ENGAGEMENTS IN THE ARCTIC
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The Arctic began attracting world attention when the rate of sea-ice melting was observed to have increased as a result of climate change. This provided enhanced accessibility to the Arctic Ocean and created a geopolitical competition for resources and their control. While contemporary academic literature has focused on Chinese efforts in the Arctic due to their economic might and need to address the Malacca dilemma, efforts of India in the Arctic have been deliberated lesser with available information providing conflicting and sometimes debating opinions. However, the recent 'Arctic Policy of India' is considered a step towards developing a whole-of-government approach and direction to India's policy-makers on contours of India's engagement with the region.

Realising that India stands to gain substantially from the Arctic, the engagement of India with the region has been evolving over the years. Accordingly, the speaker provided a broad overview of India's growing activities in matters Arctic with a focus on improving its future prospects in this region. To offer a clear understanding, the speaker provided a view of the 'Arctic Policy of India' and how through this policy India aims to promote a peaceful world and address common issues such as climate change while ensuring sustainability in the region by using its vast pool of scientific human resource and expertise for both Himalayan and Polar research to work under the broad contours of the best practices recommended by the Arctic Council.

The speaker highlighted the need to use the strength and expertise of India in digital economy to create data centres for commerce in the region that would encourage businesses both public and private to engage more closely in the fields of ports, railways, airport, mining, and mineral exploration. Similarly, by encouraging interdisciplinary research through collaborative and innovative human resource development through conferences, faculty and student exchange through academic programmes, innovative ideas could be developed. Such an effort would help develop a better understanding of the region and its concern areas to eventually help assist the indigenous communities of the Arctic to cope with issues such as disruption of unique ecosystems and loss of traditional knowledge. All of these need

to work with a perfect understanding that the region is governed by numerous domestic laws, agreements, treaties, conventions and customary laws many of which are bilateral and accordingly demand that cooperation with nations of the region have to be within the framework of both national and international regulations.

These efforts will ensure that for India in the near future, science and technology becomes the backbone and an indispensable part of all multilateral and bilateral diplomatic engagements with nations of the Arctic. These efforts need to be supported by means of various forms of diplomacy that include military and science diplomacy to create international scientific partnerships by means of dialogue, negotiation, and cooperation with like-minded nations.

Since the impact of climate change is here to stay, the Arctic maritime trade route will become a reality and the time is not far off when large number of ships move in these waters for a prolonged duration of the year. It is thus essential that India continues to maintain its relevance in the region through science and trade activities and by taking necessary steps in the direction as laid out by the 'Arctic Policy of India'.