

Parliament passed Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022

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In news— Parliament has recently passed the Indian Antarctic Bill, 2022.

Key features of the bill-

- It **aims at having India's own national measures for protecting the Antarctic environment** as also the dependent and associated ecosystem.
- The bill is in **pursuant to India's accession to Antarctic Treaty, the Protocol on Environment Protection (Madrid Protocol) to the Antarctic Treaty and to the Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.**
- Bill also seeks to **ensure de-militarization of the region** along with getting it rid of mining or illegal activities.
- It **also aims that there should not be any nuclear test / explosion in the region.**
- It provides a **harmonious policy and regulatory framework for India's Antarctic activities through well-established legal mechanisms** and will help in efficient and elective operations of the Indian Antarctic Programme.
- It will also facilitate India's interest and pro-active involvement in the management of growing Antarctic tourism and sustainable development of fisheries resources in Antarctic waters.
- It will also help in increased international visibility, credibility of India in Polar governance leading to international collaboration and cooperation in scientific and logistics fields.

- **The enforcement of such laws will confer Jurisdiction on the courts of India** to deal with any dispute or crimes committed in parts of Antarctica.
- The Bill also **proposed to set-up the Indian Antarctic Authority (IAA) under the Ministry of Earth Sciences**, which **shall be the apex decision making authority** and shall facilitate programmes and activities permitted under the Bill.
- **Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences will be the Chairperson of the IAA** and the IAA will have official members from the concerned India Ministries and decisions will be by consensus.

India's initiatives related to Antarctica-

- **India today has two operational research stations in Antarctica named Maitri (Commissioned in 1989) and Bharati (Commissioned in 2012).**
- India has successfully launched **40 annual scientific expeditions to Antarctica** till date.
- **With Himadri station in Ny-Alesund, Svalbard, Arctic, India now belongs to the elite group of nations that have multiple research stations within the Polar Regions.**
- **The Antarctic treaty was signed in 1959 by 12 countries** – Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, French Republic, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Union of South Africa, USSR, the UK of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the US of America, and came into force in 1961.
- **India signed the Antarctic Treaty in 1983 and received consultative status the same year.**
- The **Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources was signed at Canberra** on the 20th day of May, **1980**, inter alia, for the protection and preservation of the Antarctic.

- **India ratified the Convention on 17th June, 1985** and is a member of the Commission for Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources under that Convention.
- **The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty was signed at Madrid on 4th October, 1991**, inter alia, to **strengthen the Antarctic Treaty system** and for the development of a comprehensive regime for the protection of the Antarctic environment and dependent and associated ecosystems.
- **India signed the Protocol** on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty on 14th January, 1998.

Further

reading:

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