

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
OCEAN DEVELOPMENT
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2053
ANSWERED ON:05.08.2005
VISIT TO GLACIAL CONTINENT
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Will the Minister of OCEAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a high level team has visited the glacial continent to take stock of various operational and scientific activities during February, 2005;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the details of the strengthening Antarctic Programme of India evolved after such visit ?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE(INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) OF THE DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL)

(a) & (b) Yes, Sir. An eight member Indian delegation led by Hon`ble Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ocean Development visited Indian Antarctic Station `Maitri` during 2 - 4 February, 2005 to gather first hand information about the scientific activities being carried out and inspect the available research and other facilities. The delegation inspected the on going field research work around Maitri, Historic site, India Point and also made a courtesy visit to the nearby Russian station, `Novolazarevskaya`. This visit, the first by a Minister, not only helped in boosting the morale of the Indian team working in the harsh Antarctic conditions, but has also given significant attention to our Antarctic Programme.

(c) Based on the inspection, steps has been taken to improve the living quarters for the scientific personnel at Maitri. Ten containerized insulated living modules and two containerized bathing modules will be sent to Maitri with the next expedition. The main station building, built in 1989, has already outlived its expected life span of ten years. Experts from Engineers India Limited (EIL) and Structural Engineering Research Centre (SERC), Chennai have inspected the building and based on their report, action is being taken to further strengthen the main building. India is also planning to establish a new research base, for which a site has been selected and preliminary surveys have already been conducted.