

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EARTH SCIENCES
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1541
ANSWERED ON:01.12.2006
EXPEDITION TO ANTARCTICA
Kalmadi Shri Suresh

Will the Minister of EARTH SCIENCES be pleased to state:

- (a) whether programme of the next expedition to the Antarctica has been finalized;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the criterion of selection of the team members visiting Antarctica;
- (d) whether the team visiting Antarctica consists of only the scientists and technicians; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof ?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND EARTH SCIENCES (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL)

(a) & (b) Yes, Sir. The XXVI Indian Antarctic Expedition team consisting of 44 scientists and 15 logistics personnel has been finalized. Out of which a group consisting of 4 scientists and 10 logistic personnel have already reached Antarctica on 8th November, 2006 using Dornier Maud Land Air Network (DROMLAN) and second batch consisting of 9 scientists will be reaching by the end of November, 2006 by flight. While the main expedition team consisting of 31 scientists and 5 logistic personnel will be leaving around 23rd December, 2006 by ship from Goa. The ship will first go to the Larsemann Hills area, the site of the proposed new research base and from there it will go to Maitri Station.

(c) Selection of the Scientific team is done by National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR), Goa by inviting research proposals. This is followed by screening of the proposals by NCAOR. Short-listed proposals are evaluated by Groups of Experts under five categories namely, Meteorology and Atmospheric Sciences; Earth Sciences and Glaciology; Biology and Environmental Sciences; Human Physiology & Medicine and Engineering and Communication. The selected projects and the composition of the expedition team is then finalised by the National Committee for Antarctic Programme, headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences. The logistics team is selected by Ministry of Defence. The team members then undergo a medical fitness test carried out by All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, while the wintering team members also undergo a psychological test.

(d) & (e) The Expedition team consisting of Scientists and Technical/Logistics Personnel has two components, the Summer and the Winter Team. Summer team mainly consists of scientists while the wintering team consists of scientists and logistics personnel comprising of engineers, technicians and other support staff.