

PRESS RELEASE

(30.7.2026)

REPORTS OF THE COMMITTEE ON EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ON THE SUBJECT 'INDIA'S ROLE AND PRESENCE IN THE ARCTIC AND ANTARCTIC REGIONS'

The Committee on External Affairs headed by Dr. Shashi Tharoor presented the Fourteenth Report of the Committee on the subject “India’s Role and Presence in the Arctic and Antarctic Regions” to the Lok Sabha on 30 July, 2026. The Report deals with 19 topics and contains 29 recommendations.

Some of the important Observations/Recommendations made by the Committee in their Fourteenth Report are as under:

1. Appointing a Polar ambassador

Taking note of the fact that all Arctic Council Member States and most Non-Arctic Observer States including Japan, China, Singapore and South Korea have Polar/ Arctic Ambassador, the Committee felt that India should also have such an ambassador at a level equivalent to other countries exclusively to deal with polar regions. Creating such a position will not only help India project the importance given to these regions in its foreign policy architecture but will also help put across its policy stance in relation to polar areas/ pursue polar diplomacy in a more effective manner, the Committee recommended the Government to consider appointing a polar ambassador for polar engagement and facilitating collaboration.

Recommendation No. 4

2. Membership of the Arctic Council

Keeping in view the direct linkage between Arctic climate and climate condition in India and therefore the need to have a voice in the governance and decision-making process in Arctic Council, the Committee expressed the view that the Government should take up the matter of ‘member’ status whenever there is a review of the Arctic Council. Further, India should continue to deepen its ties with the Arctic nations and other Observers to play a leading role in the development of the Arctic region and seek their support to work as a Member of the Council in future.

Recommendation No. 6

3. Arctic Policy 2022

In view of the evolving landscape of the Arctic due to rapidly changing climate and the changing geopolitics of this area where major powers have shown a keen interest to secure their strategic, economic and energy needs, the Committee recommended that the Arctic policy should be expanded to include ‘Geopolitics and Strategy’ as another guiding factor to maintain India’s supremacy as a dominant science based player and to establish India as an important power in the Arctic.

Recommendation No. 7

4. Role as a leader of Global South

Appreciating India's commitment for holistic and human-centric development of all the countries in the Global South as well as taking note of the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)'s help to UAE to undertake scientific activities in Antarctica and support to countries such as Bangladesh and Mauritius to participate in the Indian Antarctic Expedition, the Committee expressed hope that the Government will adopt a suitable strategy to further strengthen its role as a representative of the Global South advocating their collective interests in the Arctic and the Antarctic Regions.

Recommendation No. 10

5. Quadrilateral agreement with Japan, South Korea and Singapore

Acknowledging the need for greater collaboration among Arctic Council Observer nations in Asia viz. India, Japan, South Korea and Singapore to pursue their interests in the Arctic region, the Committee recommended the Government to have a quadrilateral agreement among India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea so as to enhance our collective voice in the Arctic Council in which the four countries are Observers.

Recommendation No. 11

6. Development of Northern Sea Route

Taking note of the fact that trade has been benefitted by the introduction of new route viz. Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor since November, 2024 and that development of shipment along the Northern Sea Route (NSR) is being actively considered between India and Russia, the Committee have recommended to pursue the same which will greatly benefit both the economies as well as strengthen further bilateral ties between them.

Recommendation No. 14

7. Need for an Indian narrative on Arctic

Keeping in view the fact that India's claim to be an important stakeholder in the polar areas is based on science, sustainability and multilateral cooperation and the same needs to be further propagated to enable appreciation of India's efforts and the acceptance of its leadership in Arctic affairs, the Committee recommended that Indian narrative of Arctic needs to be formulated at the earliest to enhance India's leadership position in polar areas of the world and project the Indian narrative of the Arctic in every platform to firmly establish its stake.

Recommendation No. 16

8. India's leadership role in Antarctica

Taking note of the divergence among all parties in Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) arising from differing national priorities, economic interests and differing interpretation of the Antarctic Treaty's principles, the Committee observed that India has strongly advocated for Antarctica to remain a peaceful, cooperative, and ecologically protected Global Commons, while focusing on scientific and environmental issues. While appreciating the above position of the Government, the Committee urged the Ministry of External Affairs to take a more proactive

role and address the challenges by engaging with various member States through diplomatic channels so that Antarctica continues to remain a demilitarised, peaceful zone for scientific research and to promote international cooperation.

Recommendation No. 19

9. Inspection of Research Stations by India

Considering that India has not made use of the provision for 'inspection of research stations' under Antarctic Treaty System which is very much necessary to assert its rightful position, the Committee urged the Ministry to take necessary measures and start inspecting the research station of other member States starting with the research stations of those consultative parties which have already visited the Maitri Station.

Recommendation No. 21

10. Responsible Tourism in Antarctica

While appreciating the Government's efforts in taking a lead role for sustainable tourism in Antarctica, the Committee have recommended that India should make efforts for arriving at consensus for a legally binding agreement for regulation of tourism in Antarctica. The Committee further desired that since Indian tourists need to obtain authorisation from NCPOR to visit Antarctica, Indian Tour Operators and tourists visiting Antarctica may be properly sensitised about the fragile nature of the Antarctic ecosystem, before they undertake any tourism activity, so as to promote responsible and sustainable tourism.

Recommendation No. 22

11. Need for enhancing funds for India's polar research programme

Considering the fact that continuous low allocation will hamper the progress of scientific endeavours and thereby affect our diplomatic influence in polar regions, the Committee recommended to increase the budgetary outlay under Polar Science & Cryosphere Research (PACER) scheme for effective year round operations of our research stations and enable us taking up activities with partner countries on equal footing.

Recommendation No. 23

12. Exploitation of marine resources of Antarctica

The Committee recommended that Indians may participate in Antarctic fishing, with due evaluation of the environmental risks, in line with India's commitment for sustainable development. Further, the Government should continuously pursue the development of Marine Protected Areas in East Antarctica and the Weddell Sea, and renewal of Conservation Measures (51-07) for enforcing spatial allocation controls across the sub areas of the region to promote environmentally sustainable exploitation of marine resources.

Recommendation No. 24

13. Acquisition of Polar Research Vehicle (PRV)

Considering the huge shortage of ice class vessels for hiring, which is seriously affecting India's Polar research and scientific activities, the Committee have expressed hope that acquisition of Polar Research vessels with ice breaking capacity for undertaking both scientific and logistical activities in Arctic and Antarctic regions shall be completed in a time bound manner.

Recommendation No. 26

14. Incentive to polar studies and research

The Committee emphasised the need for giving incentives to polar studies and research by providing research fellowships and grants to PhD scholars for undertaking research and other training programmes so that more young scholars are encouraged to pursue Arctic studies and to specialise in polar and cryosphere sciences, creating a steady pool of skilled manpower in the long term.

Recommendation No. 27