

# India makes first expedition to South Pole

November 1 2010, by Pratap Chakravarty

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A worker is seen at the US controlled Amundsen-Scott South Pole base in Antarctica in 2001. India will kick off its first scientific expedition to the South Pole on Monday to analyse environmental changes in the frozen continent over the past 1,000 years, the mission leader said Saturday.

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Rasik Ravindra, head of the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research, is to lead a team of seven Indian scientists on the 40-day expedition from an Indian research base in the Antarctic to the [South Pole](#).

"No one has taken the route we will be taking to the South Pole," the 62-year-old researcher told AFP from the state-run centre headquartered

in the seaside Goa resort state.

The expedition is part of India's ambition of drawing international attention to its scientific presence in the desolate, icy region, scientists say.

A Russian-built Ilyushin-76 plane will fly out Ravindra's scientists to the frozen continent via Cape Town in South Africa.

"We will then traverse up 1,200 feet (3,300 metres) to the South Pole from Maitri, one of our Antarctica bases which is 100 metres (330 feet) above sea level," he said.

Maitri, which means friendship in the Hindi language, was set up in 1989 on the ice-free rocky foundation of the Schirmacher oasis in Antarctica.

The eight-member team will travel 2,400 kilometres (1,488) from Maitri to the South Pole.

The scientists will travel in vehicles specially designed for ice and will carry out wide-ranging experiments on the uncharted route to analyse climatic and other changes over the past 1,000 years, Ravindra said.

"We will conduct meteorological experiments, record humidity, temperatures, [wind speed](#) and atmospheric pressures during the 20-day trip to the South Pole and other experiments would be conducted on our way back," he said.

The experiments include geomorphology, a study of the movements of [tectonic plates](#).

"We chose the [expedition](#) because no-one has gone on this track and

things have changed over time so new data on variations will be available to us," he said.

"Everything is now linked to global warming," Ravindra said and added the team would spend just one or two days at the South Pole.

"There is no point in trying to re-invent the wheel as a US research station team is already working there," he said.

The team plan to bring air samples back to the Goa laboratory, as well as rocks collected for magnetism testing.

The research is expected to "add to the knowledge of how the ancient landmass, once fused with other continents in a super-continent before being separated 200 million years ago, has evolved," another official said.

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