

## India opposes tourism in Antarctica

India Saturday strongly opposed the commercial exploitation of Antarctica through tourism as the trend is aggravating global warming and leading to a rise in the sea level.

'Commercial exploitation of the Antarctica is harmful for human civilisation and India opposes tourism in the ice continent,' said Minister of Earth Sciences Kapil Sibal.

Speaking on the eve of the International Earth Day in the capital, Sibal said he would take up the matter during the upcoming Antarctica Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) here beginning April 30.

He, however, did not divulge the names of the countries currently commercially exploiting the countries.

Sibal, also minister for science and technology, said the intergovernmental panel on climate change had warned of the disastrous consequence of human interference and all 45 participating countries would discuss the issue in the ATCM.

'We all must resolve to reduce the pollution level up to 80 percent by 2050. This will be on the agenda in the meeting,' Sibal added.

The critical issues before the ATCM, the minister said, are environmental impacts of human activities on the sensitive ecosystems of Antarctica, especially the ship-borne tourism activities.

The impact of global climate change will be most dramatic on the polar regions and melting of ice caps in Antarctica will have far-reaching effects including rising sea levels.

Enhancing international cooperation and collaborative research, especially during the International Polar Year (2007), will be another key area for discussion in this meeting that ends on May 11.

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