

**EARTH SYSTEM SCIENCE ORGANIZATION  
NATIONAL CENTRE FOR ANTARCTIC AND OCEAN RESEARCH**

**PRESS STATEMENT**

The Bharati station, located at the Larsmann Hills, East Antarctica, is the second operational Indian base in Antarctica. Since its commissioning in March 2012, the Station has been manned round the year by a mixed complement of scientists and logistics personnel. Life support systems of the station are managed by contract engineers of NCAOR whereas the satellite ground station is managed by the NRSC personnel.

The winter-over team of the XXXII Indian Expedition to Antarctica landed at the Bharati Station in two batches, on 17 November 2012 and 23 January 2013. As with any Expedition to Antarctica, the winter complement stays back during the entire winter period and begins its return journey only after the arrival of the next Expedition Team. Considering the nature of the varied logistics tasks and the need to ensure continuity in the operation of the power, water, communication, etc. systems, the members of the earlier logistics team have an overlapping period with the corresponding members of the new team and are therefore brought back to India in a staggered manner in different groups.

The Winter period in Antarctica's harsh climate, desolation coupled with the lack of any means of returning till the arrival of the first summer aircraft or ship, staying at one place for months together with the same set of people and the resultant moodiness, can take its toll on human behaviour. This despite the very stringent physical and psychological examinations/tests, the winter members undergo at AIIMS. While groupings and inter-personal conflicts are not rare at any Antarctic Station of any country, the incident of shutting down of the power to the satellite communication by the Leader because of apparent discord with the team from NRSC was indeed a regrettable incident. Since the time when the discord between the two parties was brought to the notice of ESSO-NCAOR and NRSC-ISRO, several attempts were made by both the management to resolve the issues. Despite all efforts on the part of ESSO-NCAOR and NRSC-ISRO, the power to the satellite ground station was switched off on Monday 7 October 2013. It was resumed only on 12th October after suspension of the Team Leader and new leader was appointed.

The erstwhile Leader was brought back to India by the first feeder flight from Bharati to Maitri and from there to India via Cape Town. ESSO-NCAOR has also filed a police complaint on the 14th October against the Leader for the wanton act of shutting down power to the satellite station. A Fact-Finding Committee has also been constituted with approval of the competent authority to enquire into the various acts of indiscipline and insubordination by the different members of the Expedition including the erstwhile Leader and the NRSC Team. The Committee is expected to commence its enquiries as soon all members of the team return to India.