

Fight over the Arctic

Nations vie with each other for resources in the North Pole

POOJA GAUTAM

Control over the Arctic and its resources has become a reason for problems between Russia, US, Norway, Denmark and Canada. It seems like the Arctic Ocean is taking the ships of these countries into waters of deep trouble.

According to the US Geological Survey, Arctic might contain 25%

of the world's oil and natural gas resources. This seems a very good reason for the conflict. And also the fact that it is rich in diamond, gold, manganese, platinum, tin, nickel

and lead. The ice cover over the Arctic Ocean has cracked, giving way to explore its waters. It is also said that by 2040, there will be no ice covering over the Arctic Ocean giving ample opportunity to explore the land in great detail.

Russia, very recently planted its flag on and under the Arctic Ocean, laying its claim on the territory. The Mendeleev Ridge and the Lomonosov Ridge, which are underwater Arctic ridges, are extensions of Russia's continental shelf. This will allow Moscow to claim 1.2 million square kilometers of the ocean bed, in accordance with UN Law of The Sea Convention of 1982. This convention gives a maritime nation a 200-mile economic exclusion zone off their coasts.

Canada and Denmark (with regard to Greenland) are trying to document that the Arctic is an extension of the North American continental shelf. Russia actually has a history with the Arctic. Under Peter the Great, Russia opened the

Arctic Ocean to commerce, and made Alaska its colony. However, in 1867, Russia sold it to the US, since the Government at that time was desperate for money. This is US' reason for laying its claim.

This crisis has goaded the growing competition between Russia and US. As it is, conflicts over diminishing resources will grow common over the next decade.

Also, the environmental problem that the Arctic is facing should not and cannot be ignored. Global warming was cited as a reason for the ice to break away. Mr. Nagesh

Hegde, an environmentalist says, "India too has entered the arena in a small way. We had sent a team to Nye Allesond headed by Rasik Ravindra. Everyone is rushing there because Arctic ice melting is exposing the land/seashore that is rich in oil. Exploitation of that resource would further aggravate the Green House effect". But if we have more commercial activities in the area, it is just going to aggravate the problem- something that is not desirable to anyone.

Mr. Eric Margolis, writer of 'War at the top of the world', says, "There's a much better method to handle this potential gold rush. The entire, oval-shaped Arctic zone surrounded by the 200-mile limits of Canada, the US, Norway, and Denmark should become a special UN economic zone. Any nation seeking to drill or mine in this region should buy concessions from the UN and pay it royalties that will be used to fund humanitarian and ecological projects."



Arctic ocean surrounded by countries claiming rights over it
Courtesy Google Images

Peace summit in Sudan on its way

AKANSHA PRADEEP

Moi, Kenya's special peace official to Sudan met Museveni on Monday and agreed to plan an urgent summit to resolve the Sudanese crisis, the date of which will be announced later. They agreed that members of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) should help in resolving the problems faced by the implementation of comprehensive peace agreement (CPA).

The conflict in the land of fur better known as Darfur has been on since years. This largest country of Africa has been at war for most of the years since its independence in 1956. The conflict between the Sudanese Arab government and the African rebel groups became intense in 2003. These rebels are fighting against the fur farmers for rights over land.

There are mainly two rebel groups: the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). But now, more than a dozen groups are responsible for brewing increasing trouble. Regular famines, droughts and the backwardness in the nation only increase the panic and chaos in the country. The frequent attacks by the militia have caused irreparable damage to land and property. Millions of people have been killed, women raped and villages destroyed. The neighbouring Chad is refusing to accept refugees from Sudan. The state of affairs in Sudan have worsened to such an extent that US researchers find it difficult to differentiate between the number of deaths due to violence and due to starvation. Many aid agencies are working in Darfur but are unable to provide maximum support to the civilians due to the intense fighting in most of the areas.

Indo-Russia terms suffer a clash of interests

Russia wary of growing Indo-US ties even as the bilateral nuclear pact for Kudankulam plans remains unsigned

SHUBHI MEHROTRA

At the time of the Cold War, India was one of the Soviet Union's major allies outside the communist bloc. There were elaborate exchanges in terms of military products, technology, entertainment and culture between the two nations.

But the equation has changed. Today, Indian interests are oriented towards the US. Prime minister Manmohan Singh's brief two-day visit to Moscow witnessed grand declarations on long lasting friendship by both sides and the signing of four agreements on joint unmanned lunar mission, multi-role transport aircraft, rupee-ruble trade and narcotics control.

"Our relations have a long-standing history and develop in the best way," said Putin. Manmohan Singh enjoyed Putin's praise and acknowledged his "large personal contribution" to strengthening Russia-India relations.

However certain skepticism has been developing in Moscow about India's moves on issues of foreign policy and the purchase of military hardware, reported Russian sources. One reason for this acrimony is the failure of both the parties to sign a bilateral nuclear pact on building four more reactors at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu, which was expected during the visit. This has highlighted that New Delhi was determined not to

risk its nuclear deal with the US for a separate deal with Moscow. However Indian officials accompanying Manmohan Singh denied any such suppositions. They stated that it was not possible to go ahead with the Kudankulam agreement without an India-specific safeguards agreement with the IAEA as it would have reduced the pact to a "useless piece of

paper." Another issue that is bothering Russia is the halting of the Indo-US nuclear deal through which Russia had hoped to earn billions by supplying nuclear reactors and fuel. Yet another important cause for Russian concern is that India, which once depended on Moscow for 80 percent of its

military purchases, is expanding its imports of military hardware. Companies in the US and Europe, along with Russia have become prime contenders for the \$12 billion Indian tender to buy 126 fighter planes; something which fell in the Russian domain earlier.

Undeterred by the apparent tension between the nations, Manmohan Singh stated "Despite major transformations in the world, our relations remain firmly rooted in a mutual bond of friendship, understanding and trust." Let us hope the two nations carry this statement forward.



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with Putin at the Indo Russia summit in Moscow
Courtesy Google Images

Marijuana may hold cure for breast cancer

GAYATHRI VAIDYANATHAN

Marijuana just may hold the cure for breast cancer, according to scientists in the United States. But don't start smoking pot just yet.

Researchers at the California Pacific Medical Center Research Institute have identified a compound in cannabis called cannabidiol or CBD as a potential non-toxic therapy for cancer.

Equate non-toxic with very little side effects and the full potential of therapy is revealed- the same effects as

chemotherapy, but without nausea, vomiting, hair loss and increased risk of infection. The compound works by blocking the activity of Id-1, a protein found in excess in cancer cells.

All cells originate in drab uniformity- your blood cells came from the same ancestor cell as your nerve cells and sperm or egg cells. At some point in the lifetime of that ancestor cell, a program ("differentiation") gets activated and tells the cell to become more than it is- perhaps a cell of the breast tissue.

But in some cells, the differentiation programs are not activated because Id proteins, among others, block the genes

containing the instructions.

Breast cancer cells are undifferentiated, with high amounts of Id. The protein has also been linked to aggressive cancers that spread from one part of the body to another in a process called metastasis.

CBD binds to Id-1 and allows differentiation so that cancer cells can become differentiated and normal. They lose their infinite capacity to proliferate, thereby killing cancer. The Id protein has been linked to aggressive cancer of the breast, brain and colon.

CBD is not addictive and is not a drug, stressed the researchers to BBC News. Patients should not start smoking marijuana, as the necessary dosage of CBD will not be reached.

The compound has been shown to block aggressive human brain and breast cancer in lab. Clinical trials in humans are yet to be conducted.

The BBC news has cited Dr Joanna Owens of Cancer Research UK: "This research is at a very early stage. The findings will need to be followed up with clinical trials in humans to see if the CBD is safe, and whether the beneficial effects can be replicated."



Marijuana leaves
Courtesy Google Images

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