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1. What is the case against WikiLeaks' Julian Assange, who can now appeal his extradition to the US?

Why in News?

The High Court in London recently allowed WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to appeal against his extradition to the United States. The US government has made several attempts in recent years to have Assange face trial on its soil over charges of espionage.

The recent order comes as a relief for Assange, who has spent the last few years in the UK in confinement to evade extradition attempts. In the late 2000s, his website WikiLeaks made public thousands of pieces of confidential documents linked to the US military. These revelations are at the centre of the criminal charges against him now.

Who is Julian Assange and what is WikiLeaks?

Assange, 52, is an Australian citizen. Early on in his life, he displayed an interest in computer hacking. These skills were put to use in a website he founded in 2006, called WikiLeaks. It describes itself as a media organisation that publishes confidential government and corporate documents for maintaining transparency.

Assange shot to global prominence in a few years, thanks to his website. Some of its most notable "leaks" were documents from the US government, saying the US military had killed hundreds of civilians in unreported incidents during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In 2010, WikiLeaks leaked more than 250,000 classified cables from US embassies to prominent media outlets, such as The Guardian and The New York Times.

What was the US government's response?

In 2019, the US government indicted Assange on 18 charges for violating the Espionage Act and the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. It alleged that WikiLeaks obtained its information illegally and sharing it endangered the lives of its officials in foreign countries.

He was also alleged to have "conspired" with US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning. Manning was posted in Iraq and helped leak documents to WikiLeaks. She was sentenced to 35 years in jail following a court martial, but the term was commuted and she was released in 2017.

Since 2019, attempts have been made to extradite Assange and have him face trial in the US. However, Assange and his lawyers have argued against this.

What has happened to Assange since the leaks were made?

JULIAN ASSANGE

a brief timeline of legal woes

2006

OCTOBER

WikiLeaks is founded.

2010

APRIL

WikiLeaks releases video of a US air strike that **KILLED CIVILIANS** in Baghdad, Iraq.

JULY

WikiLeaks releases classified US military reports about the **AFGANISTAN WAR**.

NOVEMBER

A Swedish court orders Assange's arrest over **RAPE ALLEGATIONS**. He is arrested in Britain in October 2010 but freed on bail.

2012

JUNE

Assange takes refuge in the **ECUADORIAN EMBASSY** in London, sidestepping extradition to Sweden for sexual assault charges.

2019

APRIL

Assange is **ARRESTED** by British authorities. The US Justice Department also charges him with conspiring to hack into a Pentagon computer network to obtain classified documents with the help of army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning.

MAY

Assange is indicted on 17 counts of violating the **ESPIONAGE ACT** by the US Department of Justice.

JUNE

The US Justice Department officially requests that Britain extradite Assange to face espionage charges.

2020

FEBRUARY

Assange's **EXTRADITION HEARING** begins at a London court.

2021

JANUARY

District judge Vanessa Baraitser at Westminster Magistrate's Court blocks extradition citing Assange's 'frail' mental health and **RISK OF SUICIDE**.

DECEMBER

The high court overturns the previous judgment by the Westminster Magistrates' Court and decides that Assange can be extradited to the United States.

2022

JANUARY

British court rules that Assange can appeal a decision that would allow the U.S to extradite him where he would face charges under the Espionage Act. If extradited and charged he would spend **LIFE IN PRISON**.

MARCH

UK Supreme Court rules that Assange is **DENIED PERMISSION** to appeal against US extradition.



Around the time of the US documents' leaks, Assange was in Sweden. Here, two women associated with WikiLeaks accused him of sexual assault and molestation. He denied the

charges and claimed they were part of American attempts for extradition. In a bid to escape them, he fled to London.

Swedish police then issued an international arrest warrant against him. Assange surrendered to police in the UK and was detained, but later granted bail. However, a district court ruled for his extradition to Sweden.

Fearing arrest, Assange entered the Embassy of Ecuador in 2012 to seek asylum, which was granted by the South American country. For the next few years, Assange stayed there in a house arrest-like situation and attempted to appeal against the Sweden case.

Over time, he began having run-ins with the Ecuador government, leading to his expulsion from the embassy and revocation of the asylum in 2019. This led to dramatic scenes, with the London police sweeping in to arrest Assange for “failing to surrender to the court” over a warrant issued in 2012.

By late 2019, the Swedish cases against him had been dropped due to multiple factors, including the evidence being dated. However, Assange now had the US case to worry about.

How has the US attempted to extradite Assange?

Assange was sentenced to 50 weeks in prison for his actions in the UK in 2012. Since then, he has been lodged in a high-security prison near London. Also in 2019, the US indicted him and began extradition proceedings with the UK government.

A long legal battle thus began, with Assange appealing against the extradition at various levels of the UK judicial system, and the US government countering them. The main issue here was whether Assange would be treated humanely and receive a fair trial upon reaching the US, if extradited.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

2. What is Copernicus Emergency Management Service, called in to locate Raisi's chopper?

Why in News?

Soon after Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's helicopter crashed, the European Union (EU) activated its rapid satellite mapping service to help search efforts, following a request for assistance from Iran. The wreckage of the helicopter was found in less than 24 hours.

The rapid mapping service is one of the crucial components of the Emergency Management Service (EMS), which comes under the EU's Copernicus programme. What is the Copernicus EMS, and how does its rapid mapping service work?

What is the Europe Union's Copernicus programme, to begin with?

The Copernicus programme is part of the EU's space programme and aims to monitor the Earth and its environment by collecting data from a set of satellites known as the Sentinels. It

also gets data from contributing missions (existing commercial and public satellites) and in situ or non-space sources such as ground stations.

The data are processed and analysed to generate value-added information, which can be used for a wide range of applications in many areas. These include land management, the marine environment, the atmosphere, emergency response, security, and climate change.

Launched in 1998, the Copernicus programme was earlier called Global Monitoring for Environmental Security (GMES). Currently, it is implemented by the European Commission (EC) with support from the ESA and the European Environment Agency (EEA).

And what is Copernicus EMS?

The Copernicus EMS has been in operation since 2012, and provides geo-spatial information derived from satellite remote sensing and in situ data sources to help manage natural disasters, man-made emergencies, and humanitarian crises.



There are two components of the service: the mapping component and the early warning component. The former provides maps and analysis based on satellite imagery; the latter issues alerts about floods, droughts, and forest fires, and gives near-real time assessment of

forest fire impacts.

The mapping component has two modules: rapid mapping (RM); risk and recovering mapping (RRM). The RM, which was activated to look for Rishi's crashed helicopter, provides maps within days or hours, anywhere in the world. The RRM delivers maps that are required for disaster management — and not for immediate responses — within weeks or months. It is used for prevention, preparedness, disaster risk reduction, and recovery.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

3. Antarctic Parliament meets in Kochi: What's on the table?

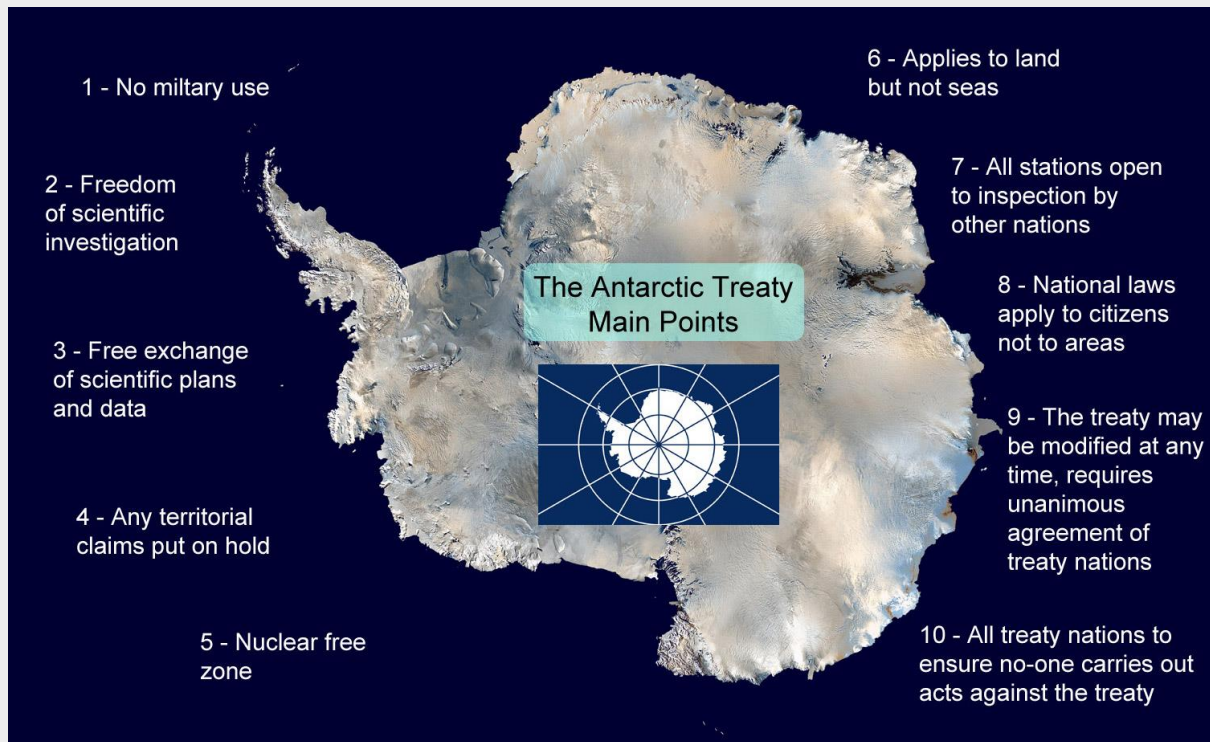
Introduction

India is hosting the 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM 46), also known as the Antarctic Parliament, from May 20-30 in Kochi. The National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Goa, through the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), has organised the meeting, which will be attended by the 56 member countries of the Antarctic Treaty. India had last hosted the ATCM in New Delhi in 2007.

The Antarctic Treaty

Twelve countries — Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the USSR, the United Kingdom, and the United States — were the original signatories to the Antarctic Treaty, which was signed on December 1, 1959. The treaty came

into force in 1961, and a total of 56 countries — including India, in 1983 — have joined it since then.



The Antarctic Treaty, which was signed during the Cold War, effectively designated Antarctica as a “no man’s land”, outside the bounds of international geopolitical competition. A few key features of the treaty are:

- * Antarctica shall be used only for peaceful purposes, and no militarisation or fortification shall be allowed.
- * All signatories will have the freedom to carry out scientific investigations, and should share plans for scientific programmes, extend required cooperation, and freely make available the data gathered.
- * Nuclear testing or disposal of radioactive waste materials shall be prohibited anywhere in Antarctica.

Today, the treaty forms the basis of all governance and activities in Antarctica, the fifth-largest continent on the planet.

India in Antarctica

Since 1983, India has been a consultative party to the Antarctic Treaty. In this capacity, India votes and participates in all key decision-making processes regarding Antarctica. Of the 56 nations that are part of the Antarctic Treaty, 29 have consultative party status.

India has undertaken scientific research in Antarctica since 1981. The first Indian Antarctica research station, Dakshin Gangotri, was set up in 1983, some 2,500 km from the South Pole in Queen Maud Land. The station operated till 1990.

In 1989, India set up its second Antarctica research station, named Maitri, in the Schirmacher Oasis, a 3-km wide ice-free plateau with over 100 freshwater lakes. It is still operational and located about 5 km from Russia's Novolazarevskaya Station, and 90 km from Dakshin Gangotri. According to the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research, Maitri can accommodate 65 persons in summer, and 25 in the winter.

In 2012, India inaugurated Bharati, its third Antarctica research station, located around 3,000 km east of Maitri, on the Prydz Bay coast. Although the station focuses on oceanographic and geologic study, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) utilises it for receiving Indian Remote sensing Satellite (IRS) data. The station can support up to 72 individuals during summer, and 47 in winter.

India plans to open a new station, Maitri II, a few kilometres from the ageing Maitri station. Operations are set to begin by 2029.

In 2022, India enacted the Antarctic Act, reaffirming its commitment to the Antarctic Treaty.

Agenda before ATCM

1. The ATCM is meant to facilitate a global dialogue on law, logistics, governance, science, tourism, and other aspects of the southern continent.
2. During the conference, India will seek to promote the idea of peaceful governance in Antarctica, and underline that geopolitical tensions elsewhere in the world should not interfere with the protection of the continent and its resources.
3. India would also introduce a new working group for regulating tourism on the continent. The Netherlands, Norway, and some other European countries that share India's views on formulating regulations for tourism in Antarctica, will be part of this working group, which hopes to come to a consensus regarding some actionable guidelines. Currently, tourism to Antarctica is driven by tour operators, and little is known about the threat tourists may pose to Antarctica's fragile ecosystem.
4. During the Kochi meet, India will also officially table its plan to construct Maitri II before the members. Any new construction or initiative in Antarctica requires the ATCM's approval.
5. The ATCM will see discussions on sustainable management of Antarctica and its resources; biodiversity prospecting; inspections and exchange of information and data; research, collaboration, capacity building and cooperation; and climate change impacts on Antarctica and beyond.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: Indian Express