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1. Project Nimbus and its opposition**Why in News?**

Over the past week, more than 1,200 self-identified STEM students and workers have signed a pledge to not take jobs or internships at Google or Amazon. Their reason: the companies' involvement in Project Nimbus, a \$1.2 billion project which provides cloud computing infrastructure to the Israeli government.

This is not the first time that the tech giants have been called to end their association with Project Nimbus. Amidst Israel's destruction of Gaza, and continuing discrimination against Palestinians in the West Bank, this demand has gained further momentum.

What is Project Nimbus?

The Israeli government describes Project Nimbus as a "multi-year project, intended to give a comprehensive, in-depth response to the provision of public cloud services for government ministries, auxiliary units and related bodies."

It says that there is "great value in having a public cloud service within the borders of the State of Israel. This service will operate in a configuration that will preserve the sovereignty of information and prevent leakage of sensitive information outside the borders of the country". Google and Amazon jointly won the bid for Israel's Project Nimbus in April 2021. Google says that the agreement will "deliver cloud services to all government entities from across the state, including ministries, authorities, and government-owned companies."

How exactly does Project Nimbus allegedly harm Palestinians?

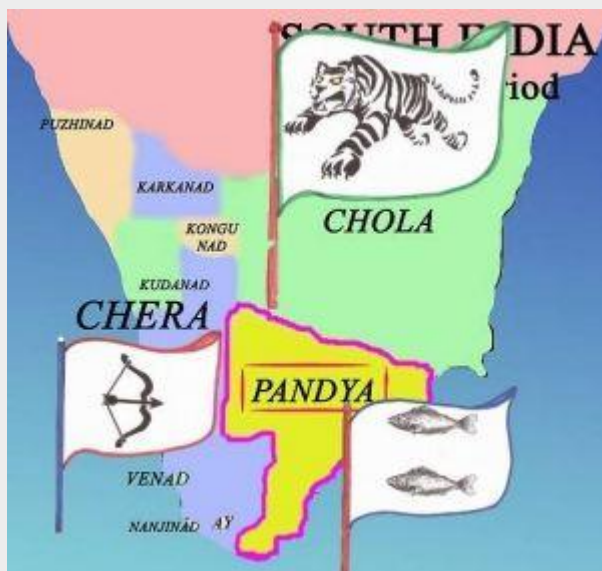
Critics of Project Nimbus say that it enables Israeli surveillance on Palestinians, and occupation of their land. An investigation by The Intercept in 2022 found that Google was "offering advanced artificial intelligence and machine-learning capabilities to the Israeli government" through Project Nimbus.

The investigation reviewed training documents and videos obtained through a publicly accessible educational portal intended for Nimbus users to claim that "Google is providing the Israeli government with the full suite of machine-learning and AI tools available through Google Cloud Platform". The new cloud, the investigation revealed, could give "Israel

capabilities for facial detection, automated image categorisation, object tracking, and even sentiment analysis that claims to assess the emotional content of pictures, speech, and writing”.

2. Behind Kerala Assembly's demand to rename state as Keralam

Kerala Assembly unanimously passed a resolution urging the Centre to rename the state as "Keralam" in the Constitution. This is the second time in the past year that such a resolution has been passed. The resolution was moved by Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan.



Keralaputra, literally "son of Kerala" in Sanskrit, refers to the dynasty of the Cheras, one of the three main kingdoms of southern

Story of statehood

After independence, on July 1, 1949 the two Malayalam-speaking princely states were integrated to form the state of Travancore-Cochin. The state of Kerala was finally created after the State Reorganisation Commission's recommendation creating states on linguistic-bases. The state of Kerala came into being on November 1, 1956.

3. WikiLeaks' Julian Assange set to walk free: What is the deal he made with the US govt?

Introduction

After years of legal battles and tensions with the governments of multiple countries, WikiLeaks founder and Australian citizen Julian Assange left a UK prison following a London High Court bail order.



His website WikiLeaks, which made public several classified United States government documents over the years, said in a post on X: "JULIAN ASSANGE IS FREE".

Some of the disclosures on WikiLeaks led Assange to be charged with treason by the US government. He is now expected to make a deal with

them, appear before a US court, and plead guilty to one charge in exchange for the long-running case against him to be brought to an end.

What is Assange's deal with the US?

Over the years, the US government has made several attempts to have Assange face trial on its soil over charges of espionage. Assange, who has been living in confinement in the UK in recent years, has appealed against this at various levels of British courts.

In a major relief to Assange last month, the High Court in London allowed him to appeal against his extradition to the US. His lawyers have reportedly been negotiating with the US Department of Justice since then. The Australian government has also reached out to the US government.

Now, he has agreed to a deal where he will plead guilty to a "single felony count of illegally obtaining and disclosing national security material in exchange for his release from a British prison".

Further, "Top officials at the Justice Department accepted an agreement with no additional prison time because Mr. Assange had already served longer than most people charged with a similar offense — in this case, over five years in prison in Britain."

Assange will be tried in a US court on the island of Saipan. Saipan is located in the western Pacific Ocean and is the capital of the Northern Mariana Islands (NMI), a US commonwealth. Assange has opposed extradition to the US mainland.

Who is Julian Assange and what is WikiLeaks?

Assange, 52, is Australian. Early on in his life, he displayed an interest in computer hacking. These skills were put to use in a website called WikiLeaks, which he founded in 2006. It

describes itself as a media organisation that publishes confidential government and corporate documents to maintain transparency.

Assange shot to global prominence within a few years of the website's launch. 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 it fought in Afghanistan and Iraq.

One video showed a US Apache helicopter firing at suspected insurgents in Iraq. It ended up killing a dozen people, including two staffers from the news agency Reuters, and showed the US military crew laughing at the casualties.

In 2010, the same year as the military leaks, WikiLeaks publicly released over 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. According to an Associated Press report, Manning was posted in Iraq and helped leak some 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 the indictments, attempts have been made to extradite Assange for facing trial in the US.

What has happened to Assange since the leaks were made?

Around the time of the US military 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's ruling leftist government. 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 his 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 earlier?

Assange was sentenced to 50 weeks in prison for his actions in the UK. He was lodged in a high-security prison near London from 2019 onwards. The US also indicted him the same year and began extradition proceedings with the UK government.

A long legal battle thus began, with Assange appealing against the extradition and the US government countering him. The main issue was whether Assange would be treated humanely and receive a fair trial upon reaching the US if extradited.

Assange's lawyers said he needed protection under the First Amendment of the US Constitution, which safeguards free speech, because WikiLeaks and its releases constituted journalistic work. They feared that he may be awarded the death penalty.

The US government argued that Assange's actions "went way beyond those of a journalist gathering information, amounting to an attempt to solicit, steal and indiscriminately publish classified government documents."

Britain's Supreme Court refused to allow him to appeal against his extradition in 2022. This led the British government to order the extradition. However, Assange appealed against it. A High Court judge then ruled in the US government's favour, leading to a 'final bid' from Assange's lawyers.

This was eventually accepted last month, laying the ground for the current deal.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express