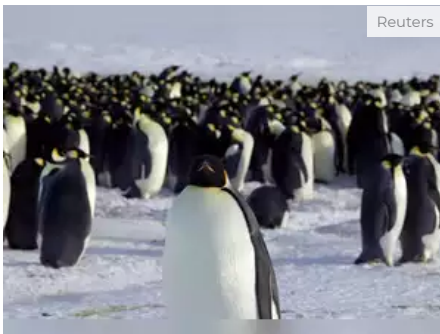


Key Antarctica meetings begin in Kochi on May 20 under shadow of Ukraine conflict

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Synopsis

The 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) commences in Kochi, with discussions overshadowed by the Ukraine-Russia conflict, which has impacted previous deliberations. Over the next ten days, signatory nations will focus on collaborative research and sustainable resource management in Antarctica. Regulation of tourism in the continent and applications for consultative status by Belarus and Canada are also on the agenda. Russia's increased surveys for oil and gas reserves in Antarctica raise concerns among partner nations about territorial claims.



Representative image.

The 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting begins in [Kochi](#) on Monday under the shadow of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, an issue that has been affecting the discussions for the past two years. The 10-day deliberations among signatory nations to the Antarctic Treaty are expected to focus on collaboration between parties on research and exchanging information on plans for sustainable management of resources in the icy continent.

Also on the agenda for the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting ([ATCM](#)) is the development of a framework for regulating [tourism in Antarctica](#), given the pristine and delicate nature of the continent, and applications by [Belarus](#) and [Canada](#) for [consultative status](#) at the deliberations.

"We expect the [Ukraine conflict](#) to figure in the talks and we have to ensure that it doesn't affect the meeting in a big way," a senior official closely involved in the ATCM's organisation said.

[Russia](#) and Ukraine have consultative status or full decision-making roles at the ATCM, which takes all decisions by a consensus.

Russia's increase in surveys of the Antarctic region for oil and gas reserves has also caused some anxiety among the partner nations, some of which believe that Moscow may stake claim to large swathes of the continent.

[Union Earth Sciences Minister Kiren Rijiju](#) is scheduled to formally inaugurate the ATCM at the [Lulu Bolgatty International Convention Centre](#) in Kochi on Tuesday.

The ATCM and the 26th Meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection is hosted by the [Union Ministry of Earth Sciences](#) through the [National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research](#).

The meeting is also expected to deliberate on the development of a framework for tourism in Antarctica -- the only continent without any indigenous population.

For the 2022-23 season, the [International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators](#) reported 32,730 cruise-only visitors, 71,346 landed visitors and 821 deep-field visitors.

The ATCM has 56 member-nations, of which 29 have consultative status or decision-making powers. The remainder have non-consultative status.

Canada and Belarus are seeking consultative status but their petitions have run into opposition.

Officials said the argument against Canada's candidature is that the North American nation does not have a research station in Antarctica while the scientific output of Belarus is not considered to be adequate for granting consultative status.

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