

ISRO docks two satellites, puts India in elite league

SpaDeX mission gained control of them as a single object; ISRO to follow up manoeuvre with undocking and power transfers; India joins the ranks of U.S., Russia and China with this feat

Hemanth C.S.
BENGALURU


The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully executed a satellite docking experiment in the early hours of Thursday, "making India the fourth country" after the U.S., Russia and China to achieve this historic feat.

The two satellites – SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target) – launched by the PSLV C60 on December 30 successfully docked as officials from the Mission Operations Complex (MOX) at the ISRO Telemetry, Tracking, and Command Network (ISTRAC) oversaw the complex procedure.

"Docking Success Spacecraft docking successfully completed! A historic moment. Let's walk

On track On December 30, ISRO's SpaDeX mission launched into orbit two satellites, SDX01 (Chaser) and SDX02 (Target). Two weeks on, the mission proved a success but it was not without a few hiccups. Here's a timeline of events:

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| Jan. 7 The space agency had initially scheduled the docking for this day but postponed it to Jan. 9 | Jan. 8 ISRO observed a more-than-desired drift between the two satellites and postponed the docking again | Jan. 12 The satellites were moved within 3 metres of each other in a trial attempt and then returned to a safe distance | Jan. 16 Inter-satellite distance was reduced to 3 metres from 15 metres and both satellites were successfully docked | SIGNIFICANCE Demonstration of this technology is vital for futuristic missions such as manned craft to the moon and building and operating an Indian space station |
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through the SpaDeX docking process: Manoeuvre from 15m to 3m hold point completed. Docking initiated with precision, leading to successful spacecraft capture. Retraction completed smoothly, followed by rigidisation for stability. Docking successfully completed. India became the 4th country to achieve successful Space Docking.

Congratulations to the entire team! Congratulations to India," ISRO said on X.

Post-docking, the agency took control of the two satellites as a single object. "Undocking and power transfer checks to follow in coming days," it added.

The SpaDeX mission is an important project designed to develop and demonstrate the technology

needed for spacecraft manoeuvres. The demonstration of this technology is vital for futuristic missions such as sending an Indian astronaut to the moon, and building and operating an Indian space station.

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PM approves constitution of Eighth Pay Commission

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Days ahead of the Delhi Assembly election, the Union government approved the establishment of the Eighth Pay Commission here on Thursday, accepting a demand of the central trade unions and employees' organisations.

The commission's outcome will benefit about 50 lakh Union government employees and 65 lakh pensioners.

Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the Chairperson and two members of the commission would be appointed soon.

Union Cabinet clears third launch pad at Sriharikota

Planned with a ₹3,984.86-crore outlay and a four-year timeline, the third launch pad will serve as a 'standby' for the first two launch pads, and support newer launch vehicles developed by ISRO

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved the construction of a third launch pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota, Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Thursday.

The launch pad will have an outlay of ₹3,984.86 crore, and is targeted to be completed by early 2029.

The launch pad comes as the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) seeks to launch its Next Generation Launch Vehicles (NGLVs) starting in 2031.



Fresh boost: The previous launch pad at Sriharikota has been operational for almost two decades. PTI

ISRO said in a statement that it would also support Indian-manned spaceflight missions, with its chairman V. Narayanan envisaging a 2026 target for the

first such mission.

"The third launch pad is designed to have configuration that is as universal and adaptable as possible that can support not only

NGLV but also the Launch Vehicle Mark 3 vehicles with semicryogenic stage as well as scaled up configurations of NGLV," a Cabinet statement said.

The previous launch pad has been operational for almost two decades, and this new pad will boost ISRO's launch capabilities and capacities in Sriharikota.

"The expeditious establishment of a third launch pad to cater to a heavier class of Next Generation Launch Vehicles and as a standby for SLP is highly essential so as to meet the evolving space transportation requirements for another 25-30 years," the Cabinet note underlined.

Indonesian President to be chief guest on Republic Day

Prabowo will be accompanied by a massive military contingent that will march down Kartavya Path with the Indian military; the two countries are also close to concluding a deal on BrahMos

Suhasini Haidar
Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto will be the chief guest at the Republic Day Parade this year, with the Indonesian Army bringing the largest foreign contingent so far to march down Kartavya Path alongside India's military.

The visit on January 25 and 26, announced by New Delhi and Jakarta simultaneously, will make Mr. Prabowo the fourth Indonesian President to be invited as the chief guest on Republic Day.

According to sources, the two countries are also close to concluding a \$450-million deal for the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile systems, which will make Indonesia the second export customer for the Indo-Russian system. An announcement of the deal is expected during the visit.

Sources confirmed that Indonesia's Defence Ministry has officially sent a request to the Indian Embassy in Jakarta over the proposed deal on BrahMos, which was earlier



Prabowo Subianto will be the fourth Indonesian President to be invited as the chief guest on India's Republic Day. REUTERS

procured by the Philippines. The request is now being processed by the Defence Ministry for a detailed response, the sources said. Indonesia has expressed interest in procuring other Indian military platforms such as the Dhruv advanced light helicopters and the Akash air defence systems. Mr. Prabowo, who was the Defence Minister of Indonesia under President Joko Widodo, was sworn in as President in October 2024.

Friendly relations

"India and Indonesia share warm and friendly ties spanning over millennia. As a Comprehensive Stra-

tegic Partner, Indonesia is an important pillar in India's Act East Policy and our vision of the Indo-Pacific," said the Ministry of External Affairs in a statement announcing the visit. "President Prabowo and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will witness the exchange of a number of memoranda of understanding between the governments of the two countries in various sectors, including health, culture, education, maritime security and safety, traditional medicine, which aim to strengthen cooperation between the two countries," the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

said in a statement on Thursday.

"The visit of the Indonesian President to India confirms the strengthening and expansion of strategic cooperation between Indonesia and India, especially in the economic, defence and maritime sectors," it added, disclosing that Mr. Prabowo would be accompanied by a 352-member military contingent that would march down the parade route. The massive Army contingent, the largest foreign contingent so far, has been practising for the event for several months, officials said, and will include 152 marching troops and 189 cadets from the military bands with both men and women.

According to the official programme, Mr. Prabowo will pay his respects to Mahatma Gandhi at Rajghat and receive a ceremonial welcome at the Rashtrapati Bhavan forecourt on January 25, followed by a bilateral meeting with Mr. Modi at Hyderabad House. He will go to the parade on January 26 and attend the "At Home" tea hosted by President Droupadi Murmu before leaving.

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The other objectives of the mission include demonstration of the transfer of electric power between the docked spacecraft, which is essential for future applications such as in-space robotics, composite spacecraft control and payload operations after undocking.

According to ISRO, after the docking and undocking events, the spacecraft will be separated and used for application missions.

“After successful docking and rigidization, electrical power transfer between the two satellites will be demonstrated before undocking and separation of the two satellites to start the operation of their respective payloads for the expected mission life of up to two years,” ISRO said.

'India ranks 2nd among world's most prepared job markets'

NEW DELHI, Jan 16 (PTI)

INDIA has been ranked the second after the US among the world's most prepared job markets for future in-demand skills, including in the key areas of Artificial Intelligence, digital and green sectors, according to the QS World Future Skills Index 2025.

The first Future Skills Index was released Thursday by London-based Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) which is known for its coveted university rankings.

The index has evaluated how well countries are equipped to meet the evolving demands of the international job market by measuring four main points -- Skills Fit, Academic Readiness, Future of Work, and Economic Transformation.

"In this new index, India places 25th overall when all four indicators are combined,



US tops the list according to the QS World Future Skills Index 2025

and is recognised a future skills contender. Additionally, India excels in the Future of Work indicator, securing the world's second-highest score (99.1), trailing the US by less than a point as the overall leader in the index,"

QS said in a statement.

India, alongside Mexico, is identified as "most ready to recruit into digital roles".

However, the report also highlights critical areas for improvement within India's higher education system, industry collaboration, and employment markets.

PM MODI LAUDS INDIA'S PERFORMANCE: PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday lauded India's performance in the QS World Future Skills Index which has ranked the country the second among the most prepared job markets for future in-demand skills. "This is heartening to see! Over the last decade, our Government has worked on strengthening our youth by equipping them with skills that enable them to become self-reliant and create wealth. We have also leveraged the power of technology to make India a hub for innovation and enterprise.

Global economic conditions to weaken in 2025, India's strong growth continues: WEF

NEW DELHI, Jan 16 (PTI)

A MAJORITY of chief economists worldwide expect weaker global economic conditions in 2025 but India is likely to maintain a strong growth despite signs of some momentum being lost, a new report said on Thursday.

In its latest Chief Economists Outlook, the World Economic Forum said the global economy is set to face significant challenges in 2025, with 56 per cent of chief economists surveyed expecting conditions to weaken. Only 17 per cent foresee an improvement, pointing to heightened uncertainty in key regions and the need for measured policy responses worldwide, it found.

The US economy is expected to deliver robust growth in 2025, and South Asia, particularly India, is also expected to maintain strong growth.

The outlook for Europe remains gloomy, with 74 per cent of respondents predicting

weak or very weak growth this year.

The outlook for China also remains weak, and growth is projected to slow gradually in the years ahead, the WEF said in the report prepared on the basis of consultations and surveys with leading chief economists from both the public and private sectors across the globe. The report further said South Asia continues to stand out, with 61 per cent of chief economists expect-



ing strong or very strong growth in 2025.

"This regional performance has been driven largely by robust growth in India, which remains the world's fastest-growing major economy. However, there are now signs of some momentum being lost," it said.

The latest national accounts data for India point to year-on-year GDP (gross domestic product) growth of 5.4 per cent in the third quarter of 2024, the slowest rate in nearly two years, prompting a downward revision to the central bank's annual growth forecast in December.