

# ISRO to launch SpaDeX mission today

NEW DELHI, Dec 29 (ANI)

**THE** Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to launch its year-end mission, "Space Docking Experiment" (SpaDeX), on Monday at 9.58 PM from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR in Sriharikota. The mission will use PSLV-C60.

The primary objective of the SpaDeX mission is to develop and demonstrate the technology needed for rendezvous, docking, and undocking of two small spacecraft (SDX01, which is the Chaser, and SDX02, the Target, nominally) in a low-Earth circular orbit. "SpaDeX, because of its small size and mass, is even more challenging due to the finer precision required for the rendezvous and docking maneuvers compared to docking two large spacecraft. This mission will be a forerunner for autonomous docking needed for future lunar missions like Chandrayaan-4 without the support from Earth," ISRO said. In SpaDeX, a novel RODP processor is included in the SPS receiver, which allows accurate determination of the relative position and velocity of the Chaser and the Target.

# 179 KILLED PLANE BURST INTO FLAMES AFTER SKIDDING OFF RUNWAY IN S KOREA

SEOUL, Dec 29 (AP)

A PASSENGER plane skidded off a runway at a South Korean airport on Sunday, slammed into a concrete fence and burst into flames after its front landing gear apparently failed to deploy. All but two of the 181 people on board died in one of the country's worst aviation disasters.

The Jeju Air plane crashed while landing in the town of Muan, about 290 kilometres south of Seoul. The Transport Ministry said the plane was a 15-year-old Boeing 737-800 jet that had arrived from Bangkok and that the crash happened at 9:03 AM.

A total of 179 people — 85 women, 84 men and 10 others whose genders weren't immediately identifiable — died in the fire, the South Korean fire agency said. Emergency workers pulled two people, both crew members, to safety. Health officials said they are conscious and not in life-threatening condition.

Among the 177 bodies so far found, officials have so far identified 88 of them, the fire agency said. The passengers were predominantly South Korean, as well as two Thai nationals. Thailand's Foreign Ministry said its embassy in Seoul



Firefighters and rescue team members work near the wreckage of a passenger plane at Muan International Airport, South Korea on Sunday. (AP/PTI)

received confirmation from South Korean authorities that the two Thai passengers were among the fatalities.

The fire agency deployed 32 fire trucks and several heli-

copters to contain the blaze. About 1,570 firefighters, police officers, soldiers and other officials were also sent to the site, according to the fire agency and Transport Ministry.

Footage of the crash aired by South Korean television channels showed the plane skidding across the airstrip at high speed, apparently with its landing gear still closed, overrun-

ning the runway and colliding head-on with a concrete wall on the outskirts of the facility, triggering an explosion. Other local TV stations aired footage showing thick plumes of black

smoke billowing from the plane, which was engulfed in flames. Lee Jeong-hyeon, chief of the Muan fire station, told a televised briefing that the plane was completely destroyed, with only the tail assembly remaining recognizable among the wreckage. Lee said that workers were looking into various possibilities about what caused the crash, including whether the aircraft was struck by birds, Lee said.

Transport Ministry officials later said their early assessment of communication records show the airport control tower issued a bird strike warning to the plane shortly before it intended to land and gave its pilot permission to land in a different area.

The pilot sent out a distress signal shortly before the plane overshot the end of the runway and skidded across a buffer zone before hitting the wall, the officials said.

Senior Transport Ministry official Joo Jong-wan said workers have retrieved the flight data and cockpit voice recorders of the plane's black box, which will be examined by Government experts investigating the cause of the crash and fire. He said it may take months for investigators to

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# Indian Railways gears up to equip Kavach 4.0 across its key routes

NEW DELHI, Dec 29 (ANI)

INDIAN Railways is taking significant steps towards enhancing the safety and efficiency of its operations by accelerating the deployment of the advanced Kavach 4.0 automatic train protection system.

It is speeding up to deploy an advanced Kavach 4.0 - automatic train protection system across its key routes.

Kavach 4.0 is an enhanced comprehensive, technology-driven solution developed by Indian Railways to prevent accidents and ensure the smooth operation of trains, providing an additional layer of safety and control, according to officials.

According to a press release issued, all the locomotives where a lower version of Kavach was installed will be replaced with the upgraded Kavach 4.0. Over NF Railway approximately 1966 RKM of length from Malda Town



to Dibrugarh have been identified for implementation of Kavach.

The implementation of Kavach 4.0 by Indian Railways across its key routes is a broader initiative to modernise its infrastructure

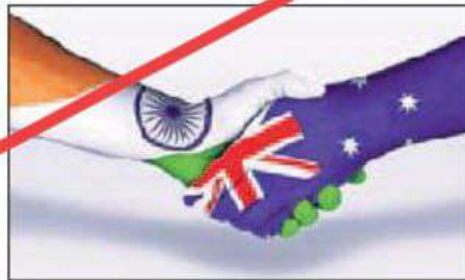
and improve safety standards. By leveraging technology such as Kavach 4.0, the connectivity system will ensure smoother operations, minimising human error and most importantly preventing accidents.

# 'India's exports to Aus ↑ 64.4 pc in Nov'

NEW DELHI, Dec 29 (PTI)

**INDIA'S** exports to its trade agreement partner Australia rose 64.4 per cent year-on-year to USD 643.7 million in November on account of healthy growth in sectors such as textiles, chemicals and agricultural products, according to the Commerce Ministry data.

However, the country's merchandise exports recorded a decline of 5.21 per cent year-on-year to USD 5.56 billion during April-November 2024-25, the



preliminary data showed.

India and Australia implemented an interim trade pact - Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) -- on December 29, 2022 and are now in negotiations to widen the scope of the pact and make it a

Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA).

On the completion of two years of ECTA, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said the agreement has brought with it increased market access for Indian exporters, expanded opportunities for MSMEs and farmers, and generated several employment avenues.

It has also enabled growth in exports by 14 per cent in 2023-24; notable boost in IT/ITeS, business and travel services; and

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# Navi Mumbai airport conducts commercial flight test

MUMBAI, Dec 29 (PTI)

THE upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport is set to be functional from early next fiscal year with the expected inauguration of the facility on April 17, a senior Adani Group official said on Sunday. Earlier in the day, an IndiGo A320 passenger aircraft landed successfully at 1.32 pm at runway 08/26 of the under-construction Navi Mumbai International Airport, paving the way for the Navi Mumbai International Airport Ltd (NMI-AL) to seek an aerodrome licence from the aviation safety regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to start commercial flight services.

"Our ambition is to do the

## To be functional early next fiscal

commercial inauguration of the airport by April 17," Adani Airport Holdings Ltd CEO Arun Bansal told the media after the successful trial landing of the first civil passenger aircraft. NMI-AL is a 74:26 joint venture between Adani Airport Holdings Limited (AAHL) and City and Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra (CIDCO).

Bansal said that the domestic operations will start from the second half of May as after the inaugural flight some procedures will have to be followed which will take about four weeks.

And by the end of July, he said, "we expect to start international

operations." "A historic milestone as Navi Mumbai International Airport welcomed its first commercial validation flight! Proud of our team's hard work and grateful for our stakeholders' unwavering support," said Jeet Advani, Director, AAHL, in a post on X formerly Twitter.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Feb 2018 laid the foundation stone for the new airport, which is coming up at an investment of Rs 16,700-crore with an aim to reduce the congestion at the capacity-constrained Mumbai Airport along with meeting the soaring demand for air travel in the country. The facility with two

runways and four terminals will have a capacity to cater to 90 million passengers per annum once all the five phases of the projects are completed. The first and second phases will have one runway, one terminal building. The subsequent phases 3, 4, and 5 will introduce a second runway, four additional terminals, and an increased passenger capacity of 90 million. "Mumbai Airport currently, which has issues because of the single runway, handles around 50 million passengers per month that is the pant-up demand of almost 60-65 million passengers per annum today. This means that 15 million passengers from Mumbai region are travelling to nearby states or other airports," he said.