

Team 'Gaganyaan' unveiled

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Feb 27 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi made a historic announcement on Tuesday, revealing the names of the four astronauts who are currently undergoing rigorous training for India's first-ever human space flight mission, Gaganyaan.

Addressing the audience at the Vikram Sarabhai Space



Group Captains Prashanth Nair, Ajit Krishnan, Angad Pratap and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla were bestowed astronaut wings in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. (ANI)

Centre (VSSC) at Thumba near here, the Prime Minister introduced to the nation the esteemed astronauts: Group Captains Prasanth Balakrishnan Nair, Angad Pratap, Ajit Krishnan, and Wing Commander Shubhanshu Shukla.

Bestowing them with the prestigious 'astronaut wings,' Modi hailed these astronauts as "four forces" representing
(Contd on page 5)

India won't rush to ratify 1st part of fisheries agreement

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Abu Dhabi: Govt is in no rush to ratify first part of the fisheries agreement, arguing that internal consultations are going on, while outlining its concerns over the move to expand scope of the pact here.

While WTO is seeking member nations to ratify the deal that was reached in Geneva in 2022, the response has been slow so far and India is in no mood to oblige even as chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala has set a new deadline. Besides, there is growing pressure to expand the scope, which India is resisting, with officials arguing that it is to protect the interest of fisherfolk from poor countries too.

"Countries have created huge capacities with large vessels, which are not doing livelihood fishing. India is seeking rights over exclusive economic zone (up to 200 nautical miles) as a very important geographical distinction as the livelihood of fishermen depends on that. We are unwilling to give sovereign rights," said an official, while demanding disciplines on distant fishing and other measures to discourage rich nations and others such as China that indulge in deep water fishing.

Swadeshi Jagran Manch co-convener Ashwani Mahajan said countries such as Denmark were offering subsidy in excess of \$75,000 per farmer, which was \$15 in India's case.

Civil society groups flagged other concerns too. "Indian fishermen have a history of sustainable fishing. We need to define small fishermen. Climate change has forced our fishermen to go deep. If the agreement is not in our favour it will be detrimental as 60% are below the poverty line. It is important that India puts up a strong resistance," said National Fishworkers' Forum general secretary Olencio Simoes.

Ranja Sengupta from the Third World Network underlined the need for developed countries, such as EU members, need to be disciplined. "The disciplines are not strong enough. India is seeking a long transition period, hope India does not accept anything less than 20 years."

WTO: India to oppose investment agreement

Says It's Not A Trade Issue, US Blocking Dispute Settlement And Remittances

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Abu Dhabi: India on Tuesday made it clear that it would oppose any bid by pro-Belt Road Initiative countries to push an investment facilitation agreement at WTO, arguing that it was not a trade issue and was being rushed through when critical subjects, on which the membership had given a mandate more than a decade ago was not being addressed.

Govt has argued that core issues such as reform of the dispute settlement body were blocked by the US, while there were several other areas, including inclusion of remittances where the Biden administration was opposing a deal, despite it being of use to poor and developing nations.

While 130 countries, led by China, have signed an agreement on investment facilitation for development, they are now seeking to make it part of the WTO system, something that India and So-

INDIA, SA AGAINST PACT

- ▶ 130 countries, led by China, have signed an agreement on investment facilitation for development
- ▶ They want to make it part of WTO system
- ▶ India and South Africa are opposing this
- ▶ They feel any such agreement should first be discussed among members

uth Africa are opposing. They are of the view that any such agreement should first be discussed among members, instead of presenting it as a fait accompli as sovereign decisions on investment are involved. Officials said the plurilateral agreement was agreed upon among the 130 members only on Sunday. "First there needs to be consensus at WTO on having an agreement then we can discuss the details, which was not the case

with this agreement," an official said. Since 1996, govt has opposed an investment facilitation agreement.

India is worried that provisions of the investment agreement will impact its autonomous policy space and an inclusion into the WTO framework will be used to widen the scope of the agreement. The statement came as 72 countries signed an agreement on domestic regulation of services, which seeks to make rules transparent for grant of visas to doctors and nurses as well as licenses for telecom companies and banks. India, however, does not have to take any commitments to align its regulations with the agreement.

Officials said the agreement is lower than the ambition set by India for services reform, which was being ignored by developed countries, given that India was very competitive in the sector, be it professionals or sector such as IT.

Over half of 821mn internet users from rural India: Study

Digital Entertainment, Smart TVs Drive Growth In Country

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: More than half of internet users live in Rural India.

Rural India had 442 million active internet users last year surpassing urban India which had 378 million users, showed a report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India and marketing data and analytics company Kantar.

In 2023, India had 821 million internet users compared to 759 million in the year before. Rural India witnessed a growth of 78% in the last one year, with shared device usage for internet access higher there than in urban India.

The report said that 90% of internet users surf the internet daily, spending an average of 1.5 hours on the internet. While e-commerce, digital payments and online learning are urban-centric activities, others like OTT, communication, social media, and online gaming are more democrati-

GROWING CONNECTIVITY

- Rural India had 442 million active internet users last year
- India had 821 million internet users in 2023
- Number of rural internet users grew 78% last year
- 26% of internet users in India avail cash on delivery for payment



- Close to 86% of users signed up for OTT streaming services last year
- About 70% use the internet for social media, 76% for communication, and 53% for online gaming

sed. When shopping online, only 26% of Indians avail cash on delivery to make payments as most others use digital modes of payment. Nearly 71% of digital payment users live in urban India.

The report showed 86% of internet users or 707 million people signed up for OTT audio and video services — the top use case for internet in India. About 76% use the internet for communication, 70% for social media and 53% for online gaming, the report showed. Over 80% of OTT users have used music streaming apps in the

last year. Subscription to music streaming services is recording 8% growth.

Harsh Jain, chairman of IMAI and co-founder of Dream Sports, said the report covered over 90,000 households across all states and union territories, and is dubbed as the most comprehensive survey of internet usage in India.

The rise of digital entertainment services is also bolstered by the rise of non-traditional devices (smart TV, smart speakers, firestick and Chromecast) that have witnessed a growth of 58%

Accenture centre in Bhubaneswar

Bengaluru: Accenture has opened its advanced technology centre (ATCI) in Bhubaneswar in Odisha. Part of Accenture's global delivery network, the facility will provide services for clients across industries using the cloud, data, and AI including generative AI. **TNN**

across the country between 2021-23. The adoption is driven by the new generation of first-time users — there are more people accessing video content on internet-only devices (208 million) over conventional TV (181 million).

The use of the internet in Indic languages is becoming prevalent across online activities — 57% of internet users prefer to access internet content in Indic languages in urban India.

India, Oman discuss strategic, military and security ties

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India and Oman Tuesday discussed the regional security situation resulting from Gaza conflict, including in the Red Sea, GCC region and West Asia in general, in what was the Ninth Strategic Dialogue at the level of deputy national

was held in a frank and constructive manner and both sides held discussions on various issues of regional and bilateral concern," said an official.

India thanked Oman for hosting a large number of Indians, who have contributed positively to the development of Oman. Both sides

ANI

noted that discussions on the signing of a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement were progressing and that its early finalisation would benefit both nations.

"It was agreed that all existing bilateral issues on which agreement had been



Deputy NSA Vikram Misri in Muscat on Tuesday

security advisers. Deputy NSA Vikram Misri travelled to Muscat for the talks.

According to sources, Misri expressed his deep appreciation for the close cooperation between India and Oman and expressed the hope that India-Oman ties would continue to grow.

"The strategic dialogue

reached would be closely followed up and new areas for cooperation identified. In this context, discussions were held on strategic, military and security cooperation, apart from cooperation in disaster management, Oceanography and Artificial Intelligence," said a source.

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GAGANYAAN MISSION 4 STELLAR IAF FIGHTER PILOTS WHO EARNED 'ASTRONAUT WINGS'



NEW DELHI, Feb 27 (PTI)

ISRO, the Indian Space Organisation, has selected four fighter pilots for the Gaganyaan mission, the first Indian crewed space mission, set to launch in 2024. The pilots are: Wing Commander Abhinav Singh, Wing Commander Anshu Singh, Wing Commander Anshu Singh, and Wing Commander Anshu Singh.

The four IAF fighter pilots, who have been selected for the mission, are: Wing Commander Anshu Singh, Wing Commander Anshu Singh, Wing Commander Anshu Singh, and Wing Commander Anshu Singh.

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Need to fix systemic flaws in global structures to address geopolitical challenges: EAM



NEW DELHI, Feb 27 (PTI)

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said on Tuesday that the world needs to fix systemic flaws in global structures to address geopolitical challenges.

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Feroz Khan, wife of legendary ghazal singer Faruk Khan, relatives and social celebrities pay last respects for him during his funeral in Mumbai on Tuesday. The last rites of Khan were performed with full state honours. (PTI)

'Didi protecting Sheikh due to appeasement politics'

NEW DELHI, Feb 27 (PTI)

BJP MP in West Bengal, Pradyumn Kumar Mishra, has accused the government of protecting Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's family due to appeasement politics.

He said that the government is protecting Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's family due to appeasement politics.

LS POLLS: Campaign to encourage first-time voters

NEW DELHI, Feb 27 (PTI)

The Government is launching a campaign to encourage first-time voters in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

The campaign aims to encourage first-time voters in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Join to Congress in Gujarat as its RS MP Rathwa joins BJP

GUJARAT, Feb 27 (PTI)

Former Union Minister and RS MP from Gujarat, K. V. Reddy, has joined the Congress party.

He has joined the Congress party.

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INFRA PUSH PM Modi opens space projects of ISRO

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Feb 27 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday inaugurated 3 major space infrastructure projects of ISRO during his visit to the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre at Thumba near here.

Modi, accompanied by Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan, CM Pinarayi Vijayan and MoSVMuraleedharan, also took a walkthrough of the exhibition



of the various projects showcased at VSSC.

The projects inaugurated by Modi are-- a Trisonic Wind Tunnel at VSSC, a Semi-Cryogenic Integrated Engine and Stage Test Facility at ISRO's propulsion complex in Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu, and the PSLV Integration Facility at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SHAR) in Andhra Pradesh's Sriharikota. These

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