

Starship, carrying Tesla's bot, set for Mars by 2026-end: Elon

SpaceX founder Elon Musk said on Friday that Starship is set to depart for Mars at the end of next year, carrying Tesla humanoid bot Optimus. Musk suggested in a post on X that human landings could begin as early as 2029, though 2031 was more likely if the initial landings go well.

Musk told investors on a conference call in April last year that he expected Optimus would be able to perform tasks in the factory by the end of 2024. In Nov, Reuters cited sources saying that Musk's dream of transporting humans to Mars would become a bigger national priority un-

Wilmore, Suni may return on Wednesday

Nasa and SpaceX on Friday launched a long-awaited crew to the International Space Station (ISS) that could bring home US astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, who have been stuck on the orbital lab for nine months. SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket lifted off at 7.03pm from Kennedy Space Center in Florida carrying four astronauts who will replace Wilmore and Williams, who were the first to fly Boeing's faulty Starliner capsule to the ISS in June. After the Crew-10 astronauts' ISS arrival on Saturday at 11:30 pm ET, Wilmore and Williams are scheduled to depart on Wednesday as early as 4am ET, along with Nasa astronaut Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov. REUTERS

der US President Donald Trump, signalling big changes for NASA's moon programme and a boost for SpaceX.

Starship is key to SpaceX's

future launch business, a sector it currently dominates with its partially reusable Falcon 9, as well as Musk's aspirations to colonise Mars. REUTERS

India one of four nations to demonstrate satellite docking, undocking: ISRO chief

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Mar 15 (ANI)

INDIA HAS joined an elite group of four nations that have successfully demonstrated the complex technology of satellite docking and undocking, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman Dr V Narayanan said on Friday following the successful completion of the SpaDEx (Space Docking Experiment) mission.

"India is now one of the four

countries in the world to have demonstrated both docking and undocking technology," Narayanan told reporters.

Recalling the preparations the organisation did for the mission, Narayanan mentioned that they carried out over 120 computer simulations of the mission to make sure there wouldn't be any mistakes during the mission.

"On January 16, we had a major achievement; we successfully docked both the satellites together, and it was rotating as a sin-



gle body. Then, we wanted to separate it out, the undocking process, for that we carried out a lot of studies and analysis and we made a simulator and carried out 120 simulations, as there should not be any mistakes. On 13th March, at 9:20 am, in the first attempt itself, we succeeded in the undocking process," the ISRO chairman said.

On January 16, ISRO scientists successfully demonstrated their space docking ability by docking two satellites launched under

SpaDex. When asked about India's future of manned missions, the ISRO chairman underlined that they learn from any small setbacks: "We learn lessons from all small setbacks of us and others. This is a very complex technology, so we learn. Whatever setbacks are there, we are taking care of them, and we are quite confident in the type of effort that is put. The type of dedication of Indian scientists is something else."

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Airstrike in Myanmar kills nearly 30 people, says opposition group

Bangkok: An airstrike by Myanmar's military on a central village under the control of a pro-democracy resistance group has killed at least 27 civilians and injured 30 others, an opposition group and Myanmar's online media said Saturday.

The attack occurred Friday at 3 pm in Let Pan Hla village in Singu township, about 65km north of Mandalay, the country's second-largest city, a spokesperson for the Mandalay People's Defence



AP

This handout photo shows firefighters douse fire after an airstrike by the junta on Friday

Force said. The military did not comment on Saturday.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army seized po-

wer from the elected govt of Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb 1, 2021, triggering widespread popular opposition. Many opponents of military rule have taken up arms, and large parts of the country are now embroiled in conflict.

The military govt has stepped up airstrikes against the armed pro-democracy People's Defence Force and ethnic minority guerrilla groups that have been fighting for greater autonomy for decades. AP

Head of Islamic State in Iraq, Syria killed: Iraqi PM

BAGHDAD, Mar 15 (AP)

THE head of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has been killed in Iraq in an operation by members of the Iraqi national intelligence service along with US-led coalition forces, the Iraqi Prime Minister announced on Friday.

"The Iraqis continue their impressive victories over the forces of darkness and terrorism," Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said in a statement posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Abdallah Maki Mosleh al-Rifai, or "Abu Khadija," was "deputy caliph" of the militant group and as "one of the most dangerous terrorists in Iraq and the world," the statement said.

On his Truth Social platform Friday night, US President Donald Trump said: "Today the fugitive leader of ISIS in Iraq was killed. He was relentlessly hunt-

ed down by our intrepid warfighters" in coordination with the Iraqi government and the Kurdish regional government.

"PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH!" Trump posted.

A security official said the operation was carried out by an airstrike in Anbar province, in western Iraq. A second official said the operation took place Thursday night but that al-Rifai's death was confirmed Friday. They

spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to comment publicly. The announcement came on the same day as the first visit by Syria's top diplomat to Iraq, during which the two countries pledged to work together to combat IS. Iraqi Foreign Minister Fouad Hussein said at a news conference that "there are common challenges facing Syrian and Iraqi society, and especially the terrorists of IS."

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Govt trashes Pak bids to pin Baloch attack on India, rake up J&K at UN

'Its Fanatical Mindset Is Well Known'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK



New Delhi: Govt of India slammed Pakistan for alleging Indian involvement in the Balochistan train hijack, saying the whole world knows where the epicentre of terrorism lies. In another run-in with Pakistan at UN, India also hit out at Islamabad for raising the Kashmir issue as it reiterated Jammu & Kashmir will always remain an integral part of India.

"We strongly reject the baseless allegations made by Pakistan. The whole world

Pakistan has in the past too alleged India's role in major terror attacks in the restive Balochistan province

knows where the epicentre of global terrorism lies. Pakistan should look inwards instead of shifting the blame for its own internal problems and failures on to others," said MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal, responding to claims that the train attack was sponsored by Indian authorities.

Pakistan has in the past

too alleged India's role in major terror attacks in the restive Balochistan province. "We must understand that in this terrorist incident in Balochistan, and others before, the main sponsor is eastern neighbour (India)," said Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, DG of army's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). Pakistan has accused Baloch Liberation Army of carrying out the attack on Jaffar Express that left 26 passengers and security officials dead.

Separately, at UN in New York, India hit out at Pakistan for its "unjustified" reference to J&K in UN General Assembly, asserting that such remarks will neither validate the country's claim nor justify its practice of

cross-border terrorism. "As is their habit, the former foreign secretary of Pakistan has made an unjustified reference to the Indian Union Territory of J&K," India's permanent representative to the UN, P Harish, said in remarks on Friday in General Assembly at the informal meeting of the plenary to commemorate the International Day to combat Islamophobia.

Harish said frequent references by Pakistan will "neither validate their claim nor justify their practice of cross-border terrorism". He added, "The fanatical mindset of this nation is well known, as also its record of bigotry. Such efforts will not change the reality that J&K was, is and will always be an integral part of India," he added.



Putin must 'come to table', says UK PM

UK premier Keir Starmer said the "ball was in Russia's court" and that President Vladimir Putin would "sooner or later" have to "come to the table," after a virtual summit on Saturday to garner support for a coalition willing to protect any eventual truce in Ukraine.

The British leader told some 26 fellow leaders as they joined the group call hosted by Downing Street that they should focus on how to strengthen Ukraine, protect any ceasefire and keep up the pressure on Moscow. While Ukraine had shown it was the "party of peace" by agreeing to a 30-day unconditional ceasefire, "Putin is the one trying to delay," he said.

Military chiefs will meet again on Thursday in the UK as the coalition moves into "the operational phase," Starmer said after the talks.

Russia, Ukraine trade overnight aerial attacks

Russia and Ukraine traded heavy aerial blows overnight, with both sides reporting Saturday more than 100 enemy drones over their respective territories. The attacks come less than 24 hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin met with US envoy Steve Witkoff to discuss details of the American proposal for a 30-day ceasefire in the war with Ukraine.

Russia begins demining

Russian engineering units have started demining operations in reclaimed border areas of the Kursk region, the Russian defence ministry said Saturday. The efforts are aimed to facilitate the restoration of essential infrastructure and the resumption of economic activities following intense combat, it said. AFP, AP, IANS