

# PSLV Orbital platform Experiment Module re-enters Earth's atmosphere: ISRO

BENGALURU, Apr 5 (PTI)

ISRO on Friday night said the fourth edition of the PSLV Orbital platform Experiment Module (POEM-4), the repurposed spent upper stage of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle used for the space docking experiment mission, has re-entered the Earth's atmosphere.

"Finally, the POEM-4 module re-entered the atmosphere and impacted at 02:33 UTC (08:03

IST), April 04, 2025, in the Indian Ocean," ISRO said in a post on 'X'. The safe re-entry of POEM-4 is yet another accomplishment of ISRO's commitment to contain the growth of space debris, reaffirming the prominent role of the space agency in the long-term sustainability of outer space environment and Debris Free Space Mission (DFS-M), it said.

On December 30, 2024, ISRO's PSLV-C60 launched twin SPADEX (Space Docking



Experiment) satellites and after injecting satellites at 475 km altitude, the specially configured upper stage (PS4) of PSLV-C60 (called PSLV Orbital Experimental Module in short POEM-4) was also almost in the same orbit. Noting that subsequently, POEM-4 was de-orbited by engine restarts to a nearly circular orbit at 350 km altitude with 55.2 inclination, ISRO said, the PS4 was then passively by venting the leftover fuel

to minimise any potential risk for accidental break-up. "During its mission life, POEM-4 hosted altogether 24 payloads (14 payloads from ISRO and 10 from various NGEs) and all payloads worked as expected yielding valuable science data," it said.

While the POEM-4 was in orbit, it was continuously tracked by ISRO's Radar Facilities and United States Space Command (USSPACECOM) facilities as well. The tracking data was in turn

utilised in the re-entry prediction process, ISRO said, adding that it was observed that POEM-4's orbit had decayed to 174 km x 165 km and the platform was predicted to re-enter the Earth's atmosphere on April 04, 2025. The atmospheric re-entry event of POEM-4 was then closely monitored by ISRO System for Safe and Sustainable Space Operations Management (IS4OM) and regular updates in predictions were made, it added.

# Manipur: Tripartite talks between Meitei, Kuki-Zo, MHA remain 'inconclusive'

NEW DELHI/IMPHAL, Apr 5 (IANS)

IN A bid to resolve the 23-month-long ethnic hostilities, the first tripartite meeting between the officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the representatives of Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities was held in New Delhi on Saturday.

However, both the MHA officials and the representatives of the Meitei community remained tight-lipped about the discussion of the meeting.

Kuki-Zo Council Chairman Henlianthang Thanglet, who led an eight-member delegation of Kuki-Zo-Hmar communities, said that Saturday's meeting was "inconclusive".

"There was a proposal to issue a joint peace appeal, but we did not agree upon this," Thanglet told IANS over the phone from Delhi.

He said that the MHA would decide about the venue and time of the next tripartite meeting.

A senior official of the Manipur government in Imphal said that the first tripartite meeting was held on Saturday as part of the Government's endeavour to find a mutual solution to the ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo-Hmar communities, which began on May 3, 2023, over the tribal status demand of the Meiteis.

A six-member Meitei community delegation comprising representatives from the All Manipur United Clubs' Organisation (AMUCO) and the Federation of Civil Society Organisations (FOCS) attended the meeting. Four senior officials from the Government, including MHA advisor for the north-east region, A.K. Mishra, and Joint

Director, MHA, Rajesh Kamble, were present in the meeting.

**TENSION FLARES UP BETWEEN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES AFTER VILLAGE CHIEF ASSAULTED BY MILITANTS:** Tension flared up between two tribal communities in ethnic strife-torn Manipur on Saturday after a village chief was allegedly assaulted by suspected militants over a land dispute, officials said.

The incident took place around 12.15 pm when dozens of armed militants came to Konsakhul village in Kangpokpi district and assaulted several residents, including village chief Aimson Abonmai, they said.

## 4 militants held in Manipur

IMPHAL, Apr 5 (PTI)

SECURITY forces arrested four militants belonging to two proscribed outfits from Manipur's Bishnupur, Thoubal and Imphal East districts, police said on Saturday.

Two members of the proscribed United National Liberation Front (Pambei) were arrested on Friday from Nambol in Bishnupur district for their alleged involvement in the abduction of a 47-year-old man.

Police said on receipt of information about the abduction of one Laitonjam Dilip Singh (47) of Patsoi Part-4 in Imphal West district from his residence by some unknown persons a cordon and search operation was launched.



# Waqf (Amendment) Bill gets President's assent

NEW DELHI, Apr 5 (PTI)

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu on Saturday gave her assent to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025, which was passed by Parliament earlier this week.

Murmu also gave her assent to the Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill, 2025.

"The following Act of Parliament received the assent of the president on April 5, 2025, and is hereby published for general information: The Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025," the Government said in a notification. Parliament early on Friday approved the Bill after the Rajya Sabha gave its nod to the contentious legislation following an over 13-hour debate.

The discussion witnessed staunch objections from opposition parties, which termed the Bill "anti-Muslim" as well as

"unconstitutional", while the government responded that the "historic reform" would benefit the minority community.

The Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha with 128 members voting in favour and 95 opposing it. It was passed in the Lok Sabha early on Thursday, with 288 members supporting it and 232 against it. Parliament had also approved the Mussalman Wakf (Repeal) Bill, with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod.

The Lok Sabha had already given its assent to the Bill. After the President gave her assent, it has also become a law.

Congress MP Mohammad Jawed and All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi on Friday challenged the validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Bill in the Supreme Court, saying it violated constitutional provisions.

# Immigration & Foreigners Bill gets President's assent, becomes law

NEW DELHI, Apr 5 (PTI)

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu on Friday gave assent to the Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025, which deals with issues related to foreigners and immigration, and it now becomes a law.

The Legislation received the assent of the President on April 4, 2025, and subsequently, it was notified through a gazette notification.

According to the law, henceforth anyone found to be using a forged passport or visa for

entering into India or staying in or exiting from the country will be punishable with a jail term of up to seven years and a fine to the extent of Rs 10 lakh.

The Legislation also provides for mandatory reporting of information about foreigners by hotels, universities, other educational institutions, hospitals and nursing homes to enable tracking of overstaying foreigners.

All international airlines and ships will also be required to submit at a port or place in India to a civil authority or immigra-

tion officer the passenger and crew manifest, the advance information of passengers and crew on board such aircraft, vessel or other mode of transport.

"Whoever knowingly uses or supplies a forged or fraudulently obtained passport or other travel document or visa for entering into India or staying in or exiting from India, shall be punishable with an imprisonment for a term which shall not be less than two years, but may extend to seven years and shall also be liable to fine which shall not be less than one lakh

rupees, but may extend to ten lakh rupees," according to the Act.

It also says that any foreigner who enters into any area in India without a valid passport or other travel document, including a visa required for such entry in contravention of provisions of the law or of any rule or order given in pursuance thereof, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to five years or with fine which may extend to five lakh rupees or with both.



# Rajnath Singh flags off INS Sunayna as 'IOS SAGAR' from Karwar

KARWAR (Karnataka), Apr 5 (PTI)

INDIAN Ocean Ship SAGAR that set sail from the shores of the key naval base in Karnataka's Karwar on Saturday carrying crew members from India and nine other countries will be on a nearly month-long deployment in the south-west Indian Ocean Region.

The ship was flagged off by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh in presence of Chief of Defence Staff Gen Anil Chauhan, Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi and a large number of naval officers and other personnel.

INS Sunayna, the Indian Navy Offshore Patrol Vessel, has assumed the mantle of IOS SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) under this mission that seeks to reaffirm India's commitment to "building stronger ties with its maritime neighbours and working towards a safer, more inclusive and secure maritime environ-

ment in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)".

After sailing out from Karwar, the 105-m-long ship will visit Dar-es-Salaam, Nacala, Port Louis and Port Victoria, Indian Navy officials said.

"During the course of the deployment, the ship will also participate in Africa India Key Maritime Exercise (AIKEYME) which will take place in Tanzania, besides carrying out joint surveillance activities with some of the IOR nations, and be back after a month of deployment," Indian Navy spokesperson Capt Vivek Madhwal told PTI here shortly before it was flagged off.

AIKEYME phonetically translates to a word that means unity in Sanskrit, and this mission also is about bringing navies together, officials said.

The exercise will be held from April 12-17, with both harbour and sea phase.

Multiple officials emphasised



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh flags off INS Sunayna as Indian Ocean Ship SAGAR at Karwar Naval Base in Uttara Kannada, Karnataka on Saturday. (PTI)

on the nature of the IOS SAGAR mission, describing it as "novel" and "first of its kind", involving participation of naval personnel from multiple countries on an Indian platform.

The total crew size is nearly 120, and the training held before the mission deployment has already fostered bonds of friendship and camaraderie among the personnel from different countries. Capt Madhwal said the ship is carrying 44 naval personnel from nine friendly foreign nations -- Sri Lanka, Kenya, Comoros, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania.

The flag-off of IOS SAGAR took place on a day Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on a visit to Sri Lanka to shore up bilateral cooperation with the island nation.

Singh interacted the crew members onboard the ship before the flag-off and also

obliged with a group photograph with them.

In his address later at a gathering hosted on a jetty, the defence minister congratulated the Indian Navy for this "unique concept" of IOS SAGAR.

The tagline of IOS SAGAR is 'One Ocean One Mission'.

As the ship bearing the name Sunayna on its hull sailed into the deep blue waters ahead, faces of Indian Navy personnel were flushed with pride.

IOS SAGAR will play a crucial role in shaping the future of the Indian Ocean Region, the Indian Navy said. "This mission will mark a significant step in reinforcing India's commitment to regional maritime security and international cooperation. IOS Sagar is a pioneering effort aimed at bringing together the navies and maritime agencies of the southwest Indian Ocean Region (IOR) on an Indian naval platform," a senior official of the Navy said earlier in the day.

# Iran's currency falls to record low against dollar as tensions run high

TEHRAN, Apr 5 (AP)

IRAN'S rial currency traded on Saturday at a record low against the US dollar as the country returned to work after a long holiday, costing over 1 million rials for a single greenback as tensions between Tehran and Washington likely will push it even lower.

The exchange rate had plunged to over 1 million rials during the Persian New Year, Nowruz, as currency shops closed and only informal trading took place on the streets, creating additional pressure on the market. But as traders resumed work Saturday, the rate fell even further to 1,043,000 to the dollar, signalling the new low appeared here to stay.

On Ferdowsi Street in Iran's capital, Tehran, the heart of the country's money exchanges, some traders even switched off their electronic signs showing the going rate as uncertainty

loomed over how much further the rial could drop.

"We turn it off since we are not sure about the successive changes of the rate," said Reza Sharifi, who works at one exchange. Tensions with US squeeze the rial.

Iran's economy has been severely affected by international sanctions, particularly after US President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018.

At the time of the 2015 deal, which saw Iran drastically limit its enrichment and stockpiling of uranium in exchange for lifting of international sanctions, the rial traded at 32,000 to the dollar.

After Trump returned to the White House for his second term in January, he restarted his so-called "maximum pressure" campaign targeting Tehran with sanctions.



# UGC notifies new rules for recognition of foreign degrees

■ The equivalence process will now be governed by a set of parameters, including the legitimacy of the foreign institution, the duration and level of the qualification, and its comparability to Indian programmes

NEW DELHI, Apr 5 (ANI)

THE University Grants Commission (UGC) has notified a new regulation to streamline the recognition and grant of equivalence degrees to academic qualifications obtained from

foreign educational institutions.

The move comes amid a growing number of Indian students returning from abroad with international credentials, often facing delays and uncertainty in getting their degrees recognised either for admission to Indian institutions or for employment.

Under the new regulations--UGC (Recognition and Grant of Equivalence to Qualifications Obtained from Foreign Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2025--notified on April 4, the Commission has put in place a transparent, technology-driven mechanism to assess foreign qualifications from schools and higher education institutions. However, the pro-

visions for granting equivalence certificates to foreign qualifications will not apply to professional degrees awarded in disciplines such as Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing, Law, Architecture, and other fields that fall under the jurisdiction of statutory regulatory councils in India. Such qualifications will continue to be governed by the specific norms and recognition procedures laid down by the respective regulatory bodies.

"This reform addresses a long-standing challenge and is aligned with the National Education Policy 2020's goal of transforming India into a global hub for education. If Indian institutions are to attract international stu-

dents, we must ensure fair and timely recognition of foreign degrees," UGC Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar.

The equivalence process will now be governed by a set of parameters, including the legitimacy of the foreign institution, the duration and level of the qualification, and its comparability to Indian programmes.

Importantly, the new framework removes the ad hoc nature of past recognition practices by setting up a Standing Committee on Equivalence that will vet institutions and qualifications for their validity and parity with Indian standards.

The regulations also provide for the establishment of an online

portal where applicants can submit requests for equivalence and track their status.

The Standing Committee will meet periodically and make recommendations based on established benchmarks, including the status of the foreign institution in national and international rankings. "The Commission has developed a robust and fair procedure to ensure that deserving students are not left in the lurch due to procedural ambiguity," Kumar said. The standing committee decision will be based on factors such as the minimum duration and credit requirements of the course, including a permissible variation of up to 10 per cent in normalised credit load.

# Lanka confers Mithra Vibhushana award on PM Modi

■ By Manash Pratim Bhuyan  
COLOMBO, Apr 5 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi was on Saturday conferred with the 'Mithra Vibhushana' award by Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake in recognition of his role in boosting bilateral ties.

The award, the highest civilian honour of the island nation, was instituted in February 2008 by then President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Its previous recipients include former Maldivian President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom and late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

"It is an honour for me to be awarded the Sri Lanka Mithra Vibhushana by President Dissanayake. It is also an honour for 1.4 billion Indians," Modi said in his remarks.

The award was bestowed on Modi by Dissanayake during a ceremony at the presidential secretariat in Colombo.

The recipient of the honour is awarded a citation and a silver medal to be worn around the neck, studded and adorned with nine types of Sri Lankan



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake after being conferred with the 'Mithra Vibhushana' award in Colombo, Sri Lanka. (PTI)

gems and the symbols of a lotus, globe, sun, moon and sheaves of rice. The Dharma Chakra on the medal reflects the shared Buddhist heritage that has shaped the cultural traditions of both nations.

The Pun Kalasa or ceremonial pot adorned with sheaves of rice symbolises prosperity and renewal, according to an

official. The Navarathna or nine precious gems are depicted within a globe encircled by lotus petals.

Modi landed in Colombo last evening after concluding his trip to Bangkok where he attended a summit of the BIM-STECC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation).

## India, Lanka ink major defence pact



COLOMBO, Apr 5 (PTI)

FOR THE first time, India and Sri Lanka on Saturday inked a major defence pact to institutionalise a framework for deeper engagement in the military domain with Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserting that security of both the nations is interlinked and dependent on each other.

Following talks between PM Modi and Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake,

the two sides firmed up a total of seven pacts, including one on developing Trincomalee as an energy hub and another on power grid connectivity.

In the meeting, the Prime Minister pitched for resolving the vexed fishermen issue between the two countries with a "humane approach" and hoped that Colombo will fulfil the aspirations of the Tamil people and conduct provincial council elections.

(Contd on page 5)

**'Lanka will not permit its land to be used against India'**

COLOMBO, Apr 5 (ANI)

SRI LANKAN President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Saturday reaffirmed his Government's commitment to India's security and regional stability, stating, "I reaffirmed Sri Lanka's stand that it will not permit its territory to be used in any manner inimical to the security of India as well as towards regional stability."

He was speaking in Colombo following delegation-level talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is on a State visit to the island nation.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is visiting Sri Lanka from April 4 to 6 at the invitation of President Dissanayake.