

4 astronauts return after historic lunar flyby

By Sagar Kulkarni
WASHINGTON, Apr 11 (PTI)

AMID claps and cheers, four astronauts of NASA's Artemis-II mission splashed down in the Pacific ocean after a historic flight to the Moon the first by humans in more than 50 years.

"The path to the moon is open but the work ahead is greater than the work behind," Amit Kshatriya, Indian-origin NASA Associate Administrator told a press conference shortly after the Artemis-II crew returned to earth off the coast of San Diego at 8:07 eastern time on Friday.

The lunar flyby mission involving Commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Canada's Jeremy Hansen was the first journey to the moon since the Apollo 17 mission in December 1972 when Eugene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt spent three days exploring the lunar surface.

Rick Hendling, the flight director, said the Artemis II astronauts are "happy and healthy and ready to come home to Houston."

Artemis II was the first crewed mission to utilise NASA's Space Launch System rocket and Orion crew module - demonstrating that the agency's equipment can

NASA NOW EYES LANDING ON MOON



NASA's Orion spacecraft is seen as recovery teams work to secure the spacecraft ahead of transferring Artemis II crew members Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Jeremy Hansen, unseen, following splashdown in the Pacific Ocean off California coast. (PTI)

propel astronauts out of Earth's orbit and bring them safely home.

"Yesterday, flight director Jeff Radigan said we had less than a degree of an angle to hit after a

quarter of a million miles to the Moon," Kshatriya told reporters. "And their team hit it. This is

not luck; that is 1,000 people doing their job," he said.

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Next step, Mars!: Trump

WASHINGTON DC, Apr 11 (ANI)

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Friday (local time) unveiled an ambitious plan for NASA - exploration of Mars after the Artemis II crew was extracted from their spacecraft. Trump said that the lunar mission was successful and called the crew to the White House.

In a post on Truth Social, he said, "Congratulations to the Great and Very Talented Crew of Artemis II. The entire trip was spectacular, the landing was perfect and, as President of the United States, I could not be more proud! I look forward to seeing you all at the White House soon. We'll be doing it again and then, next step, Mars! President DONALD J. TRUMP!"

The crew is now on the USS John P. Murtha and will go through post-mission medical evaluations.

US-Iran high-stakes peace talks begin in Pak

By Sajjad Hussain and M Zulqernain
ISLAMABAD, Apr 11 (PTI)

A US DELEGATION led by Vice President JD Vance held historic face-to-face talks with top Iranian negotiators in Pakistan on Saturday to reach a peace agreement to end the war in West Asia that has paralysed global energy markets and disrupted trade.

The Pakistan-brokered talks -

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- the first direct, high-level engagement between the two sides since the 1979 Islamic Revolution-- are being watched globally amid increasing expectations of a breakthrough.

Ahead of the trilateral negoti-

ations in Islamabad's Serena hotel, the Vance-led US team and the Iranian delegation head-

ed by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf held separate meetings with

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. After Pakistan PM Sharif held separate meetings with both

the delegations, formal round of direct negotiations between Iran and the United States has offi-

cially begun," a senior Pakistani official told PTI.

Pakistan's state-run PTV said Iranian and US officials sat across the table for "landmark peace negotiations." The format of the talks was not very clear.

As the negotiations continued, the Iranian Government said on social media that "talks between Iran and the US in Islamabad entered the expert-level stage as economic, military, legal, and nuclear committees joined in". Without elaborating, it added that certain "technical details" are being finalised. Sources in the Pakistani establishment said that the overall atmosphere in talks was "encouraging".

There were reports that talks may continue on Sunday if no breakthrough was achieved tonight.

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US Vice President JD Vance, centre, shakes hands with Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir (L) after arriving for talks with Iranian officials in Islamabad, Pakistan on Saturday. (PTI)

US will not allow Iran to impose tolls on Strait of Hormuz: Trump

WASHINGTON DC, Apr 11 (ANI)

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump on Saturday (local time) asserted that Washington would not allow any attempt by Iran to impose tolls on vessels passing through the strategically critical Strait of Hormuz, describing it as an international waterway amid rising tensions with Tehran.

Speaking to reporters at Joint Base Andrews ahead of US Vice President JD Vance's departure, Trump dismissed the possibility of permitting any transit charges in the region.

"No, we're not going to allow that, it's international water. If they're doing that, we're not going to let that happen," he said.

Trump's remarks come a day after he strongly criticised Tehran over its reported proposal to levy transit fees on ships crossing

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Indian vessel Jag Vikram crosses Strait of Hormuz after US-Iran truce

NEW DELHI, Apr 11 (PTI)

AN INDIA-flagged liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) tanker, Jag Vikram, has crossed the Strait of Hormuz, marking the first such transit by an Indian vessel since a temporary two-week cease-fire between the United States and Iran was announced, according to ship-tracking data.

The tanker moved through the strategic waterway between Friday night and Saturday morning and was located in the Gulf of Oman, east of the Strait on Saturday afternoon, proceeding eastwards. Jag Vikram is the ninth Indian vessel to exit the Persian Gulf since early March, while about 15 India-flagged ships remain in the region, awaiting passage.

Owned by Mumbai-based Great Eastern Shipping Company, Jag Vikram is a mid-sized gas carrier with a deadweight capacity of over 26,000 tonnes. Trade sources estimate it could be carrying around 20,000 tonnes of LPG.

At least 28 India-flagged vessels were in the Strait of Hormuz region when the West Asia conflict erupted, including 24 on the western side



and four on the eastern side of the waterway.

Prior to Jag Vikram's transit, eight vessels from the western side and two from the eastern side had managed to sail to safety. Several foreign-flagged ships carrying India-bound cargo also remain stranded in the Persian Gulf.

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India to scale nuclear capacity to reach 100 GW by 2047: Report

NEW DELHI, Apr 11 (IANS)

INDIA has set a major target to scale up its nuclear power capacity to at least 100 GW by 2047, marking the centenary of its independence, as it looks to strengthen long-term energy security and reduce dependence on fossil fuels, according to a new report.

As per a report by 'Khaleej Times', the country currently operates 24 nuclear reactors with a combined capacity of 8,780 MWe (Megawatt electric), while 8 more reactors with a capacity of 6,028 MWe are under construction.

Government projections indicate that installed nuclear capacity will rise to around 22 GW by the early 2030s before expanding sharply to meet the 100 GW target.

To achieve this more than 11-fold increase, India is pursuing a 2-pronged strategy that includes development of large reactors — such as indigenous 700 MWe pressurised heavy water reactors and imported large-capacity units at greenfield sites — alongside smaller modular systems like the 200 MWe Bharat Small Modular Reactors and 55 MWe SMR-55 units, the report said.

India, US to deepen nuclear ties, explore LPG exports



US ambassador to India Sergio Gor (L) hosts Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, in Florida on Friday. (ANI)

■ **By Sagar Kulkarni**
WASHINGTON, Apr 11 (PTI)

INDIA'S Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri discussed furthering energy cooperation with the US in nuclear power and new areas such as coal
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India remains among fastest-growing economies

NEW DELHI, Apr 11 (IANS)

INDIA remains among the fastest-growing major economies in the world despite the global slowdown – likely to clock 6.6 per cent in FY27 -- as higher energy prices caused by the Middle East conflict and supply chain disruptions weigh on economic activity.

According to the latest World Bank's latest economic update, despite significant downside risks stemming from the con-

flict, the economy's strong macroeconomic fundamentals and policy buffers offer some insulation.

Substantial foreign reserves, low inflation, predominantly rupee-denominated public debt, a healthy financial sector, and trade diversification efforts play a major role in providing resilience from external headwinds. Boosting private sector-led growth will be critical to strengthening economic resilience and supporting more

India likely to clock 6.6% in FY27 despite the global slowdown

young people to enter the workforce, says Paul Procee, World Bank Acting Director for India.

To achieve *Viksit Bharat*, a pre-

dictable, business-enabling environment will help to unlock investment and create jobs at scale in priority sectors like energy and infrastructure, manufacturing, tourism, healthcare, and agribusiness, Procee adds.

The latest South Asia Economic Update projects growth in South Asia to slow to 6.3 per cent in 2026 — from 7 per cent in 2025 — due to disruptions in global energy markets.

Despite the slowdown, South Asia continues to grow faster than

other emerging markets and developing economies. Growth is expected to recover to 6.9 per cent in 2027.

Global growth could be lowered by 0.3 to 0.4 percentage point in a baseline scenario, with an early end to the war, and by as much as 1 percentage point if it endures.

Global inflation could increase by 200 to 300 basis points, with a much higher impact - of up to 0.9 percentage point - if the war continues.

Commerce Min, Ports Deptt review packaging and shipping challenges

NEW DELHI, Apr 11 (ANI)

THE ongoing conflict in West Asia has posed significant challenges to India's trade ecosystem, particularly affecting the availability of packaging materials and disrupting logistics and shipping operations, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MoCI) said. Highlighting the gravity of the situation, the Ministry noted that disruptions in packaging materials and associated inputs have emerged as a key concern, impacting multiple sectors dependent on steady supply chains.

In response, the Department of Commerce has emphasised the need for a coordinated and proactive approach involving various ministries and stakeholders to mitigate the impact of the crisis.

"The Government remains closely engaged with all stakeholders to continuously monitor developments and ensure



swift and effective resolution of operational challenges," the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in an official press release. The issue was discussed in a high-level meeting where challenges related to ensuring the smooth flow of goods were reviewed. Several industries have reported difficulties in sourcing essential packaging materials, leading to delays and increased operational costs.

To address these concerns, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and the Central Board

of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) are working in close coordination with the Department of Commerce.

"The Department of Commerce, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) will continue to take all necessary measures, in consultation with relevant Ministries and industry stakeholders, to ensure smooth logistics operations and safeguard national trade interests," the release stated.

Ladakh secures distinct Aadhaar identity, 'J&K' TAG REMOVED

LEH, Apr 11 (PTI)

NEARLY seven years after being carved out as a separate Union territory from the erstwhile State of Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, Ladakh has finally secured a distinct identity in Aadhaar records, with the 'Jammu and Kashmir' label now replaced with 'Ladakh'.

The development, addressing a long-pending public demand, was carried out following the intervention of newly-appointed Ladakh Lt Governor VK Saxena, a spokesperson of the Lok Bhavan said.

Despite the formation of the Union Territory of Ladakh in 2019, Aadhaar records of people of Ladakh continued to bear the name of the earlier State of Jammu and Kashmir in the 'State' field -- causing widespread hassles and drawing grievances from various quarters.

Taking serious note of the prolonged pendency in this matter, the L-G directed the Union Territory administration to resolve the issue at the earliest, the spokesperson said.

Subsequently, the administration took up the matter with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI).

The long-awaited correction has now been successfully implemented, ensuring that Ladakh's distinct regional identity is accurately represented in Aadhaar, he added.

The continued reflection of 'Jammu and Kashmir' in Aadhaar records of Ladakh residents had been causing considerable inconvenience to people. Residents were facing difficulty in using Aadhaar as a valid document for identity and address while availing various services, as the 'State' field in the Aadhaar did not correspond to the post-reorganisation status of Ladakh.