

India's first manned mission to space may have a woman astronaut too



Agency New Delhi, Jan. 11

India will send a manned mission to space by December 2021 and a woman astronaut is likely to be a part of the team. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief K Sivan said the target is for two unmanned missions to space is December 2020 and July 2021. "The target for a manned mission to space is

December 2021," he said. The ISRO chief also said there is a possibility of women and civilians being part of the team. "We not distinguishing. Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel will be there, civilians can also be there. If they meet the required criteria and standard, they will be selected. The selection committee will take the final call," he said. Sivan said that the criteria for selection will be stringent for the first

mission but might be relaxed for the second and third. During his Independence Day speech last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced the plan of sending an Indian astronaut to space by 2022 on board "Gaganyaan". Modi had said the mission would be launched using ISRO's own capabilities, and on successful completion, make India the fourth nation in the world to do so.

Breather for small businesses: GST exemption cap up to Rs 40 lakh

Agency New Delhi, Jan. 11

In a bid to provide relief to small taxpayers, especially micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council Thursday decided to double the exemption threshold to Rs 40 lakh and hike the limit for composition scheme to Rs 1.5 crore from Rs 1 crore with effect from April 1. The threshold will be Rs 20 lakh for "some hilly/northern states". In its 32nd meeting, the Council also provided relaxation to composition scheme registrants to pay taxes quarterly and file a single annual return, along with extending the scheme to service providers and suppliers of goods and services up to a turnover of Rs 50 lakh with tax rate of six per cent. States will have the option to choose between the two exemption thresholds — Rs 20 lakh and Rs 40 lakh — within a week's time. With the hike in exemption threshold to Rs 40 lakh, about 20.64 lakh taxpayers, including composition scheme registrants, will have the option to move out of GST regime. The annual revenue impact of the decision is estimated to be Rs 5,225 crore, assuming that 50 per cent of registered taxpayers will move out of GST, official sources said. The other 50 per cent is still expected to stay within the ambit of the indirect tax regime for supply chain benefits, sources said. The Council also allowed Kerala to levy disaster cess on intra-state supply of goods and services within the state at a rate not exceeding 1 per cent

for a maximum period of two years for revenue mobilisation in the aftermath of floods in the region last year. Other proposals pertaining to rate cut on under-construction residential properties to 5 per cent and uniform tax rate for state-run and state-authorized lotteries were referred to two separate Group of Ministers (GoMs) after divergent views emerged in the Council meeting. It is learnt that Opposition-ruled states, such as Punjab, raised concerns over lowering the rate on under-construction residential properties citing potential leakages and no assurance of benefits reaching the end-benefits. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said each one of the decisions taken by the Council is "intended to help the SMEs". "For those who utilise the composition scheme, from April 1 onwards, it will be quarterly tax payment but only one annual return. So this takes off a lot of compliance burden on them," Jaitley said. Under the composition scheme, traders and manufacturers pay taxes quarterly at a concessional rate of one per cent, while restaurants pay five per cent GST. There are over 1.17 crore businesses which have registered under the GST, out of which over 19 lakh have opted for the composition scheme. Free accounting and billing software shall also be provided to small taxpayers by GSTN, the Finance Ministry said in a statement. On the rate cut on pending items such as cement, which is in the peak slab of 28 per cent, Jaitley said any further reductions would be considered only when revenues move up.

The Finance Minister also said that there will be a facility to "opt up or opt down" with the two thresholds, Rs 40 lakh and Rs 20 lakh, depending on revenue. For service providers, the threshold will continue to be the current Rs 20 lakh. "A few states had a view that if the turnover threshold is hiked to Rs 40 lakh, their assessee base gets eroded. So if they inform the Secretariat within a week then they would be given the option to opt down. Puducherry has kept this option... this is a one time exception and does not affect businesses with inter-state supplies," he said. Official data shows that if the GST Council would have approved a higher exemption threshold of Rs 75 lakh, it would have resulted in a revenue loss of Rs 9,200 crore per year. The option to choose between the two exemption thresholds was given as some states insisted on the current threshold of Rs 20 lakh. "Threshold limit increased from 20 to 40 lakh in GST. Kerala & Chattisgarh insisted on 20 lakh. So states given option either remain in 20 or 40 lakh," Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi posted on Twitter. Revenue Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey said that even though the exemption limit currently is Rs 20 lakh, there are about 10.93 lakh taxpayers who are below Rs 20 lakh but are paying taxes under GST. "The increased (exemption) limit (of Rs 40 lakh) is applicable for those businesses who deal in goods and also do intra-state trade and not any further reductions would be considered only when revenues move up.

Protesters block roads, burn tyres during 12-hour Assam bandh

Agency Guwahati, Jan 11

Protesters burnt tyres and kept tree trunks on roads to block movement of vehicles in Bodoland Territorial Area districts during a 12-hour Assam bandh called by a conglomerate of tribal organisations on Friday. The bandh has been called by the Coordination Committee of the Tribal Organisations of Assam (CCTOA) to protest a bill that seeks to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six ethnic communities in the state. The bandh was near total in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) such as Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Baksa and Chirang, Bongaigaon, besides in tribal-dominated areas of Morigaon, Nagaon, Hojai, Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong districts. Bandh supporters attempted to block movement of vehicles on National Highways and other roads by burning tyres and laying tree trunks in the early hours of the bandh, police said. Trucks were stranded on NH-36 at Doboka, they said. Shops, markets, educational institutions, banks, private offices remained closed, while vehicles kept off the

road. Attendance in government offices was thin due to absence of public transport in the bandh-hit areas, police said, adding that the bandh had no impact in the state capital. Security arrangements were stepped up in view of the bandh in Assam which is also witnessing massive protests over the Citizenship Amendment Bill. This bandh comes close on the heels of a 11-hour strike called on Tuesday against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill. Bandh sponsors have criticised the BJP-led Central governments move to pass the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Amendment Bill, stating it would eliminate the "genuine tribal people" of the state. The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Amendment Bill seeks to accord ST status to six ethnic groups — Koch-Rajbongshis, Tea Tribes/Adivasis, Tai Ahoms, Morans, Motoks and Chutia — was tabled in Lok Sabha on Wednesday. The bandh is also supported by Dimas Students Union, Hmar Students Association, All Biate Students Association, Hrangkhoh Students Association, All Dimas Students Union, Khasi Students Union, Karbi Students Association.

Second earthquake hits J&K in 24 hours

Agency Srinagar, Jan 11

An earthquake measuring 3.0 on the Richter scale struck Srinagar on Friday, officials said. No loss of life or property has been reported. The quake, which is the second one to hit Jammu and Kashmir in the last 24 hours, occurred at 8.21 am, with its epicenter at latitude 34.1 degrees

North and longitude 74.8 degrees East at a depth of 10 km in the old city area. Disaster Management officials said. They said no loss of life or damage to property was reported thus far. On Thursday, an earthquake of magnitude 4.6 occurred at 8.22 am with its epicenter at 34.39 degrees North and 78.21 degrees East in Ladakh region of the state.

Heavy fog delays 11 trains in Delhi

Agency New Delhi, Jan 11

The minimum temperature in Delhi settled at 7 degrees Celsius on Friday, with eleven trains running late due to fog, officials said. Humidity was recorded at 100 per cent at 8.30 am, the Met department said. According to the Railways, the Mahabodi Express between Gaya and New Delhi, Faizabad-Delhi Express and Pratapgarh-Delhi Padmavat Express were

among the trains that were delayed for an average of two to three hours. The maximum temperature on Friday is likely to hover around 21 degrees Celsius along with moderate fog in the morning. According to the Met department, there is a possibility of light rain over the weekend. On Thursday, the minimum temperature was recorded at 6 degrees Celsius while the maximum temperature settled at 21 degrees Celsius.

Lieutenant General Rajeev Sirohi Takes Over Spear Corps

IT News Imphal, Jan. 11

Lieutenant General Rajeev Sirohi, AVSM, VSM took over the reins of 3 Corps on 11 January 2019 from Lieutenant General Gopal R. AVSM, SM who proceeds on posting to Army Headquarters.



terrorism operations. He commanded an Infantry Brigade in J&K and an Infantry Division in North East.

Lieutenant General Rajeev Sirohi is an Infantry Officer from the Grenadier Regiment of the Indian Army. Lieutenant General Rajeev Sirohi has had an illustrious career

encompassing several prestigious staff assignments in Military Operations Directorate with command tenures being mainly along the borders and in counter

Assam Rifles Conducts Friendly Volleyball Match

IT News Imphal, Jan. 11

Thoubal Battalion of 9 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of HQ IGAR (South) conducted a friendly Volleyball Match at Thoubal Company Operating Base on 10th January 2019. The match was played between the team of Kairembikhok Youth club and troops of Assam Rifles. The teams played with great zeal and enthusiasm and displayed great sportsmanship during the course of the



match. The villagers appreciated the effort shown by Assam Rifles towards creating a healthy environment and developing friendly relations with local populace.

WB govt transfers DM for thrashing man in police station

Agency Kolkata, Jan 11

Alipurduar District Magistrate, Nikhil Nirmal, who courted controversy after a video went viral, in which he was seen thrashing a man inside a police station for allegedly making lewd comments at his wife on a social media platform, has been transferred. Nirmal has been

transferred to the post of managing director of the state Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation Ltd, a senior West Bengal government official said Thursday. The 2011-batch IAS officer had earlier been asked to go on leave for 10 days after the video surfaced on Monday. Subhanjan Das will be the new Alipurduar DM, the official said. In the video that went

viral, Nirmal and his wife were seen beating up the man inside Falakata police station in the presence of the Inspector-in-Charge (IC). The IAS officer and his wife were also heard hurling abuses at the man in the video. Various human rights organisations had strongly condemned the incident and demanded action against the DM and the IC of Falakata PS.

Myanmar Reuters journalists to hear appeal decision

Agency Yangon, Jan 11

Two Reuters journalists jailed in Myanmar over their investigation of atrocities committed against the Rohingya will learn Friday if an appeal against their conviction has succeeded. Reporters Wa Lone, 32, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 28, were arrested in Yangon in December 2017 and later sentenced to seven years in jail for violating the state secrets act, a charge supporters say is trumped up. "We hope for freedom for them," Than Zaw Aung, a lawyer for the journalists, told AFP Thursday, adding that the pair will not be present in court. Prosecutors said they had classified information regarding security operations in Rakhine state, from where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims fled during an

army-led crackdown the United Nations has dubbed "ethnic cleansing". At the time of the arrest they were probing a massacre of 10 Rohingya. The two men have insisted they were the victims of a police set-up, pointing to testimony from a serving officer who said superior ordered others to entrap them. The trial was widely regarded as a sham and seen as punishment for their probe, sparking outrage around the world including from US Vice President Mike Pence. Lawyers representing the young men said the Yangon Regional High Court, in its ruling expected later Friday, could uphold the sentences, reduce the terms or quash the convictions. Kyaw Soe Oo's wife Chit Su Win said she planned on attending and was

optimistic about the outcome. "I really feel excited to hear it. I believe the two will be freed," she said. Outside the country, the two men have been hailed as heroes and jointly named Time Magazine's Person of the Year 2018, alongside other persecuted and slain journalists. But they have gained little sympathy within Myanmar. The violent military campaign in 2017 forced more than 720,000 Rohingya across the border to Bangladesh, with refugees bringing accounts of murder, rape and arson. UN investigators have called for top generals to be investigated for genocide and singled out civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi for criticism for failing to stop the crackdown.