

ISRO successfully carries out flight test for Crew Escape System

BENGALURU, July 5:

The Indian Space Research Organisation today successfully carried out a flight test for a newly-designed Crew Escape System, meant for saving lives of astronauts in an exigency.

The space agency said it was the first in a series of tests to ascertain the trustworthiness and efficiency of the Crew Escape System.

The system is an emergency measure designed to quickly pull away the crew module along with the astronauts to a safe distance from the launch vehicle if the mission gets aborted.

The first 'Pad Abort Test' demonstrated the safe recovery of the crew module in case of any exigency at the launch pad, the Indian Space Research Organisation said in a release.

After a smooth five-hour countdown, the Crew Escape System along with the simulated crew module lifted off at 7.00 AM from its pad at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at



Crew Escape System (CES) lifting off from the launch pad, during a test conducted by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), at Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh on Thursday. (UNI)

Sriharikota today, it said. The test was over in 259 seconds, during which the Escape System and the module soared skyward, before arching out over the Bay of Bengal and

floating back to earth using its parachutes, about 2.9 km from Sriharikota, it added.

The ISRO has already conducted technology demonstrator tests of indigenously made Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV), capable of launching satellites into orbit around Earth and then re-entering the atmosphere.

The ISRO said the crew module reached an altitude of nearly 2.7 km under the power of its seven specifically designed quick-acting solid motors to take it away to a safe distance without exceeding the safe g-levels. Nearly 300 sensors recorded various mission performance parameters during the test flight, it said, adding that three boats are being readied to retrieve the module as part of the recovery protocol. (PTI)

Mutual accommodation and respect help democracy: Modi

NEW DELHI, July 5:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said today that the contribution of Asian democracies to global discourse needed to enhance rapidly with their rise in economic and political stature as he stressed that democratic values were rooted in Hindu and Buddhist civilisations.

Modi made these comments in a video message he posted on Twitter for the fourth edition of 'Samvad', a symposium being held in Tokyo on the theme of "Shared Values and Democracy in Asia".

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe spoke at the programme.

"Openness, and not dogma, and engaging in philosophy, and not ideology, were among our shared heritage of democratic spirit. This philosophical and cultural heritage of dialogue in the two most ancient Asian

faiths, Hinduism and Buddhism, helps us promote better understanding," Modi said.

Mutual accommodation and respect help democracy, he said.

Core values of Asia, including consideration for others, self-restraint and mutual respect, find their historical origin in emperor Ashoka's edicts 2,300 years ago, he said, adding that these values have sustained the culture of democracy in Asia.

The Prime Minister also said that historical evidence from Tamil Nadu during the reign of Raja Raja Chola in the 10th century suggests that a detailed system of voting and election was in vogue long before even the Magna Carta two centuries later.

Democracy is not just a system of voting and its core values of self-restraint and mutual respect make it function for the benefit of all, he said.

"As Asian democracies rise

in economic and political stature, their contribution to global discourse will need to enhance rapidly. I am confident 'samvad' will greatly enhance the capacities of Asian democracies to contribute to the fulfilment of human endeavours," Modi said.

He also lauded his Japanese counterpart for his "personal attention and participation" in 'samvad' that has played a key role in promoting it as a platform for dialogue on core Asian values.

Shinzo Abe said that Buddhism played a significant role in forming ideological foundation of Japan, Modi noted and added that the concept of rule of law in Buddhism was similar to the idea of 'Dharma' in India. "This is common heritage of both of India and Japan."

The first edition of 'samvad' was held in Delhi, second in Tokyo and third in Yangon. (PTI)

Scrapping UGC: HRD extends deadline for receiving feedback till July 20

NEW DELHI, July 5:

The HRD Ministry today extended the deadline for receiving feedback and suggestions from stakeholders on scrapping of the UGC and draft bill for replacing it with the Higher Education Commission for India.

The decision to extend the deadline was taken following representations from various quarters.

Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar today announced at a press conference about the deadline extension till July 20.

The HRD Ministry had last week announced its decision to replace the UGC with the HECI by repealing the UGC Act, 1951.

According to the draft, which has been placed in public domain by the Ministry to seek feedback from the stakeholders, the new commission will solely focus on academic matters and monetary grants would be under the purview of the ministry.

Less Government and more

governance, separation of grant-related functions, end of inspection raj, powers to enforce compliance with the academic quality standards and to order closure of sub-standard and bogus institutions are some of the highlights of the new Higher Education Commission of India Act, 2018 (Repeal of the University Grants Commission Act).

Javadekar also lauded the Union Cabinet's decision yesterday to expand the scope of the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) by enhancing its capital base to Rs 10,000 crore to meet the rising financial requirements of educational infrastructure in the country.

"The landmark decision will give big boost to higher education this year by adding Rs 22,000 crore funding from HEFA, which has also been tasked to mobilise Rs 1 lakh crore for Revitalizing Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022," he said. (PTI)

Ayodhya temple-mosque land dispute case: SC to resume hearing today

NEW DELHI, July 5:

The Supreme Court is likely to resume hearing on the contentious Babri Masjid-Ram Temple land dispute case tomorrow.

A special bench of Chief Justice Dipak Misra and Justices Ashok Bhushan and S A Nazeer on May 17 had heard submissions on behalf of Hindu groups that had opposed the plea of their Muslim counterparts that the 1994 verdict holding that a mosque was not integral to the prayers offered by the followers of Islam be referred to a larger bench.

M Siddiq, one of the original litigants of the Ayodhya case who has died and is being represented through his legal heir,

had assailed certain findings of the 1994 verdict in the case of M Ismail Faruqui holding that a mosque was not integral to the prayers offered by the followers of Islam.

He had told the bench that the observations made in the land acquisition matter pertaining to the Ayodhya site had a bearing on the outcome of the title case.

However, the Hindu groups had said the issue relating to the observations that the mosque was not integral to Islam has already been settled and cannot be reopened.

The special bench of the apex court is seized of a total of 14 appeals filed against the high court judgement delivered in four civil suits. (PTI)

UK court grants enforcement order in Mallya assets case

LONDON, July 5:

A UK High Court judge has issued an enforcement order in favour of a consortium of 13 Indian banks, seeking to recover funds owed to them by beleaguered liquor baron Vijay Mallya who is fighting extradition to India on fraud and money laundering charges worth nearly Rs 9,000 crore.

The order grants permission to the UK High Court Enforcement Officer to enter the 62-year-old tycoon's properties in Hertfordshire, near London.

It permits the officer and his agents entry to Ladywalk and Bramble Lodge in Tewin, Welwyn, where Mallya is currently based. However, it is not an instruction to enter, which means the banks have the option to use the order as one of the means to recover estimated funds of around 1.145 billion pounds.

"The High Court Enforcement Officer, including any enforcement agents acting under his authority, may enter Ladywalk, Queen Hoo Lane, Tewin, Welwyn... and Bramble Lodge, Queen Hoo Lane, Tewin, Welwyn, including all outbuildings of Ladywalk and Bramble Lodge to search for and take control of goods belonging to the First Defendant (Mallya)," notes the order by Justice Byran, dated June 26.

"The High Court Enforcement Officer, including any Enforcement Agent acting under his authority, may use reasonable force to enter the Property if necessary," it states.

According to legal experts with knowledge of the case, the latest order by the High Court's Queen's Bench Division is the granting of permission, should it be required, while the banks consider "all the enforcement options available to them".

The order relates to the UK's Tribunal Courts and Enforcement Act 2007 and follows a UK High

Court ruling in May, which refused to overturn a worldwide order freezing Mallya's assets and upheld an Indian court's ruling that the Indian banks were entitled to recover funds. It marked the first recorded case of a judgment of the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) in India being registered by the English High Court, setting a legal precedent.

The victory for the 13 Indian banks—which include State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, Corporation Bank, Federal Bank Ltd, IDBI Bank, Indian Overseas Bank, Jammu & Kashmir Bank, Punjab & Sind Bank, Punjab National Bank, State Bank of Mysore, UCO Bank, United Bank of India and JM Financial Asset Reconstruction Co. Pvt Ltd—enables them to enforce the Indian judgment against Mallya's assets in England and Wales.

Mallya has made an application in the Court of Appeal seeking

permission to appeal against the order, which remains pending.

Mallya, who is separately fighting extradition to India on fraud and money laundering charges worth an estimated Rs 9,000 crores, had recently issued a media statement condemning the charges against him as politically motivated. He then took to social media to clarify that he made the statement "after a long period of silence" because he had filed an application before the Karnataka High Court on June 22, setting out available assets of approximately Rs 13,900 crores.

"We have requested the Court's permission to allow us to sell these assets under judicial supervision and repay creditors, including the Public Sector Banks such amounts as may be directed and determined by the Court," he tweeted. (PTI)

Rlys to accept digital Aadhaar, driving licence as ID proof from Govt's DigiLocker

NEW DELHI, July 5:

Worried about losing your identity proofs while travelling by train? Worry no more.

Railways have now said that they will accept soft copies of Aadhar and driving licence provided they are in your DigiLocker, a digital storage service operated by the government that enables Indian citizens to store certain official documents on cloud.

The national transporter has sent a missive to all zonal principal chief commercial managers that these two identity proofs on such service will be accepted as valid proof of identity of a passenger.

"If a passenger shows Aadhaar or driving licence from the 'issued documents' section by logging into his DigiLocker account, the same should be considered as valid proof of identity," the order said.

It has, however, clarified that the documents uploaded by the passenger himself that is the documents in the 'uploaded documents' section will not be considered as a valid proof of identity.

As part of the Narendra Modi government's Digital India movement, DigiLocker can currently store digital driving licences and Aadhaar.

The cloud-based platform had also tied up with CBSE to provide digital versions of mark sheets of students. Subscribers can also integrate their Permanent Account Number (PAN) with DigiLocker. (PTI)

SC to hear plea seeking reservation for orphans at par with SC, ST, OBC

NEW DELHI, July 5:

The Supreme Court today agreed to examine a plea seeking reservation in educational institutions and Government jobs for orphans, who have no linkage in society, at par with those belonging to the SC/ST and OBC category.

A bench of Justices Ranjan Gogoi and R Banumathi issued notice to the Centre seeking its response to the plea which has also sought provision of other benefits to the orphans, including bank loans and incentives for setting up businesses.

The petition, filed by Uttar Pradesh resident Poulomi Pavi Shukla, has claimed that

the orphans, whose antecedents are unknown, were "unjustly" and "forcibly given" a religion and a caste by the Government which goes to their detriment.

The plea said that the state would have to assume the role of a "parent" for orphans.

"Issue a direction to the Government to have a policy for assigning religion to orphans and ensure that orphan children are given the right to choose their religion upon attaining majority and are not under duress of any kind to choose a specific religion," the plea said.

It also sought a comprehensive census or sample survey of children in need of care and protection saying this was essential

to fix the numbers and targets and outlays in Government schemes as well as outline the extent of the problem.

The plea has said that the state is bound to provide adequate measures for the orphans for their survival, growth and empowerment and opportunity so that they can compete on an equal footing with others.

It said the Centre should be asked to constitute an expert group of the NITI Aayog or a committee or commission like the 'Mandal Commission' with public participation to examine all aspects of orphan and children in need of care and protection and suggest solutions. (PTI)

Allow gambling, betting on sports as regulated, taxable activities: Law panel

NEW DELHI, July 5:

The Law Commission today recommended that gambling and betting on sports, including cricket, be allowed as regulated activities taxable under the direct and indirect tax regimes and used as a source for attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

The commission's report, "Legal Framework: Gambling and Sports Betting including Cricket in India", recommends a number of changes in the law for regulating betting and generating tax revenues from it.

"Parliament may also enact a model law for regulating gambling that may be adopted by the states or in the alternative,

Parliament may legislate in exercise of its powers under Articles 249 or 252 of the Constitution. In case legislation is made under Article 252, states other than the consenting states will be free to adopt the same," it states.

The commission has also recommended linking Aadhar or PAN card of an individual indulging in betting and gambling, and making the transaction cashless to regulate illegal activities such as money laundering.

The commission has also recommended amending the laws regulating forex and India's FDI policy to allow investments in the casino and online gaming industry.

"The Foreign Exchange

Management Act, 1999 and the Rules...Made thereunder as also the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy...May suitably be amended to encourage Foreign Direct Investment in the casino/online gaming industry, lawfully permitting technological collaborations, licensing and brand sharing agreements, etc," it has said.

The commission feels allowing FDI in the industry would "bring substantial amounts of investment to those states that decide to permit casinos, propelling the growth of the tourism and hospitality industries, while also enabling such states to generate higher revenue and employment opportunities." (PTI)

High chances of getting stranded due to bad weather at Kailash Mansarovar

NEW DELHI, July 5:

The External Affairs Ministry today issued an advisory for pilgrims planning to undertake the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through Nepal, saying there were "high chances" of getting stranded in various legs of the journey in case of inclement weather.

The advisory comes in the wake of the recent inclement weather along the Nepalganj-Simikot-Hilsa route of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra through Nepal, and the consequent stranding of pilgrims for over a week.

The advisory said the prospective pilgrims should note that Simikot and Hilsa in Nepal are connected to rest of the

world only by air through small aircraft and helicopters.

These small aircraft and helicopters can operate only when the weather is absolutely clear in these places and their adjoining areas, as the terrain and the route is extremely dangerous, the advisory said.

In case of poor weather, there are high chances of pilgrims getting stranded in various legs of the yatra, it said.

Noting that Simikot and Hilsa are extremely infrastructure lean places lacking medical facilities and comfortable boarding and lodging, the advisory said pilgrims should get themselves medically examined before starting the yatra and carry medicines for up to a month.

It also asked all prospective pilgrims, state governments and tour agencies to apprise themselves with the ministry's advisory issued in April and implement it in letter and spirit.

In the April advisory, the ministry had said that Indians travelling for the yatra through Nepal should ensure that they have appropriate Chinese visa and travel permit for Tibet in hand before commencing their journey.

It had said the pilgrims should note that they would be traversing Simikot and Hilsa on their way and both these places have inadequate tourist and medical infrastructure, and are prone to inclement weather due to which to-and-fro flights get disrupted. (PTI)