

ISRO launch No. 100 is Nav Sat equipped with atomic clocks developed in India

ANONNA DUTT

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

IN ITS 100th launch, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is geared to send off a 2,250-kg navigation satellite on-board GSLV-F15 from Sriharikota on January 29 at 6.23 am, the space agency said.

The NVS-02 is the second of the five second-generation satellites developed by ISRO to replace the existing satellites in the country's navigation constellation Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System.

The new generation of satellites have a longer lifespan of 12 years and are also equipped with indigenously developed, more accurate atomic clocks. These also utilise L1 frequency, which is most commonly used in the US Global Positioning System (GPS), and is likely to lead to more utilisation by smaller devices such as fitness trackers.

The January 29 launch will be the 17th flight of GSLV, with the 11th flight using the indigenously developed cryogenic engine.

The mission will last just over 19 minutes, with the satellite being injected into a 170x36,577 km Geostationary Transfer Orbit that satellites use to go into the high geostationary orbit. IRNSS – sometimes referred to as NavIC or

EXPLAINED

E

Smaller device utility

THE NEW generation of NavIC satellites utilises L1 frequency to widen the services, most commonly used in the US GPS. This is likely to lead to more utilisation by smaller devices such as fitness trackers. NVS-01, the first of the five second-generation satellites was launched in 2023.

Navigation with Indian Constellation – is a seven-satellite system that provides positioning, navigation and timing services over the Indian mainland and 1,500 km in its neighbourhood.

The first satellite in the constellation IRNSS-1A was launched in 2013, with a mission life of 10 years. The next two satellites were launched in the subsequent years. Replacements were needed for some of the satellites in the constellation even before the end of their mission life.

More troubles followed as one of the replacement satellites IRNSS-1H did not make it to orbit after the heat shield on ISRO's most reliable PSLV failed to open.

Suspended MPs say House panel on Waqf being run in dictatorial manner

DEEPTIMAN TIWARY
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

OPPOSITION MPs who were suspended Friday from Joint Committee of Parliament on the Waqf Bill alleged that the panel was being run contrary to procedures and the government was pushing the Bill in a "dictatorial manner".

The committee's Chairman Jagdambika Pal suspended 10 Opposition MPs from Congress, TMC, DMK and SP following protest over his insistence on scheduling a meeting on January 27 to prepare the report ahead of the Budget session.

"This is nothing but dictatorship. I am not aware of any precedent of suspensions from JPCs. They have formed a JPC but want to do things their own way. They want to call MPs based on their whims and fancies and that we should be available like their domestic help. Should we now celebrate January 26 with them? We have to celebrate with our family, with people of our constituencies," Congress MP Mohammed Jawed, who was among the suspended committee members, told *The Indian Express*.

Terming the functioning of the panel as "unconstitutional", Jawed alleged, "You get people who have no stake in the matter to depose. You create awareness through WhatsApp forwards. The way things are happening is totally unconstitutional. What is



Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Arvind Sawant and TMC's Kalyan Banerjee were among the 10 MPs who were suspended

saddening is that he (Chairman) is such a senior MP, but still takes dictations from the top. Every five minutes he gets a phone call and then changes his decisions."

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Arvind Sawant said, "You are insisting the next meeting will happen on January 27. Why? We are saying keep it for January 31. They said no. There is time between February 13 and March 10. So wait. This will give us time. Your objective is to table the report in this session. It will be fulfilled. But no, they kept insisting they have to prepare the report by January 27."

"It now appears the Chairman has become a tool. He gets calls from above that it has to be done. Why? Because there are polls in Delhi. BJP cannot think beyond polls. They don't care if the country is thrown into riots and anarchy. See what happened in Sambhal. There are laws protecting structures... but they want to override everything. Then why are you offering chadar at Ajmer. Then

they say we are doing vote jihad," he said. "We kept requesting you to give more time, but you are not ready. You have become a dictator."

Explaining how the row broke out, he said, "This JPC is being run in a distorted way. You just had a four-day tour till January 21. On the last day you suddenly asked us to give you our clause-by-clause amendments to the Bill by 4 pm, January 22. This is an important Bill. It has to be thought through. We said give us some time. The Chairman did not agree. We all stayed awake all night to meet the deadline. Then you kept the meeting for January 24-25 despite members asking you to defer it."

"When we arrived in Delhi, rescheduling all our public programmes for January 26, 27 and 28, you said there will be no meeting and that the next meeting will happen on January 27," he said.

Sawant said the Chairman deliberately called in the Kashmir delegation even while MPs were discussing the date for next meeting. "We were still talking about the dates when the Chairman called in the Kashmir delegation. Obviously the expectation was that we would sit quietly. They are always playing a game. Our issue has not been addressed and still you are calling them. They just want their interests to be served. We are going to stand against this dictatorship. That is why we have been suspended," Sawant alleged.

SP MP Mohibullah said he

learnt of his suspension after he had left the meeting venue because of poor health.

"While I was with the Opposition MPs and had raised my objections to the date of the next meeting, I was not involved in protesting and sloganeering inside the meeting venue as I was unwell. I even left early," he said.

He said the way the panel was being run it appeared the government wanted to get its way. "Around Republic Day public representatives have a busy schedule. So we were requesting to postpone the date of meeting. But we feel they want to get things done by putting pressure on us. It appears they want to hold our necks, tie our hands and legs and then make us give our assent to the provisions in the Bill," he alleged.

TMC's Kalyan Banerjee said members had earlier requested Pal to defer meetings due to their commitments in their constituencies. Pal had assured them he would look into it, he said.

"However, nothing happened. We were told a meeting will be held on January 24-25 for clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill. We all came. At midnight yesterday we were told the clause-by-clause meeting will not happen on January 24 as a delegation from Kashmir is coming. Then they said this meeting will happen on January 27. We objected. We said the House will start on January 31 and we all have commitments in our constituencies," he said.

PM to visit Paris Feb 10-11 to co-chair AI action summit

Accepts French President Macron invitation, may meet Trump

SHUBHAJIT ROY

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will travel to Paris on February 10 and 11 to co-chair the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Action Summit hosted by France.

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said Friday that the Prime Minister has accepted the invitation to travel to France, and will co-chair the summit at the invitation of French President Emmanuel Macron.

This will be Modi's first visit to France in his third term, and a possible opportunity to meet US President Donald Trump if he, too, attends the AI summit. India will also hold bilateral engagements with President Macron and other leaders attending the summit.

The AI Action Summit, to be held at the Grand Palais, will be attended by Heads of State, leaders of international organisations, CEOs of small and large companies, academics, non-governmental organisations, artists and civil society members.



INDONESIA PRESIDENT TO MEET PM TODAY P10

Indonesia President Prabowo Subianto, the chief guest at this year's Republic Day celebrations, with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in New Delhi on Friday. The visiting President will meet PM Narendra Modi on Saturday. PTI

France is looking to build on the momentum generated by the UK and South Korea, which had organised the previous two summits in November 2023 and May 2024, respectively.

French officials said nearly 100 countries and over 1,000 private sector and civil society representatives from across the world will be represented in
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

2 PLANES WITH 80 PEOPLE EACH FLY TO GUATEMALA

US military aircraft deport migrants, Pentagon readies more border troops

REUTERS

WASHINGTON, JANUARY 24

U.S. MILITARY C-17 aircraft began flying out migrants on orders from President Donald Trump on Friday, as the Pentagon prepared to send even more troops to southern border, including from the Army's elite 82nd Airborne division.

Trump in his first day in office declared illegal immigration a national emergency, tasking the U.S. military with aiding border security, issuing a broad ban on asylum, and taking steps to restrict citizenship for children born on American soil.

His Jan. 20 executive order instructed the Pentagon to send as many troops as necessary to obtain "complete operational control of the southern border of the United States."

"Deportation flights have begun," White House spokesperson Karoline Leavitt said on a post on X. On Friday, two U.S. military aircraft, each carrying about 80 migrants, flew from the United States to Guatemala, a U.S. official told reporters.

Earlier this week, the Trump administration said the U.S. military would be sending 1,500 additional active-duty troops to the border with Mexico. US officials told Reuters that the military was preparing to send a second wave of troops to the border with Mexico as early as next week, which would likely include troops from the 82nd Airborne.



President Donald Trump greets supporters upon his arrival at Asheville airport, NC, Friday. AP

In 1st trip since assuming office, Trump visits disaster zones in N Carolina, LA

REUTERS

ASHEVILLE, JANUARY 24

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump visited disaster-hit western North Carolina on Friday and was traveling later to Los Angeles, promising help while stoking partisan tensions with Democratic rivals over recovery efforts.

Trump's first trip since reclaiming the presidency on Monday could provide an oppor-

tunity to assure residents that the federal government will help those whose lives have been upended by hurricanes, wildfires and other natural disasters.

On arrival in Asheville, North Carolina, he sharply attacked the Federal Emergency Management Agency's handling of the after-effects of September's Hurricane Helene. FEMA was run by then-President Joe Biden's administration for the last four years.

He said he would prefer the

states be given federal money to handle disasters themselves rather than rely on FEMA to do the job. "I think we're going to recommend that FEMA go away."

Trump also sharply criticized Democratic officials' response to wildfires in Los Angeles that have caused widespread destruction this month.

Trump was due to visit Los Angeles later in the day while three massive blazes still threaten the region.

Putin says he and Trump should meet to discuss Ukraine

REUTERS

MOSCOW, JANUARY 24

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin said on Friday that he and Donald Trump should meet to talk about the Ukraine war and energy prices, issues that the U.S. president has highlighted in the first five days of his new administration.

Putin said, however, that there could be no serious peace talks with Ukraine unless the West leaned on President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to cancel a 2022 decree that bars him from negotiating with the Russian leader.

Putin described Trump, who this week threatened to hit Russia with new sanctions and tariffs if it did not negotiate an end to the war, as smart and pragmatic.

He said he did not expect the U.S. president to make decisions on sanctions that would rebound on the U.S. economy.

"Therefore, most likely, it would be better for us to meet, based on the realities of today, to talk calmly on all those areas that are of interest to both the United States and Russia. We are ready," he said, while adding that this depended on the choices of the U.S.

Trump 2.0 and Iran

Situation in the Middle East has changed significantly since the last time Donald Trump was in the White House. The drivers of the Arab-Iranian relationship are different, and there is now scope for engagement between Tehran and Washington. But there are many moving parts in the region's complex geopolitics

EXPERT EXPLAINS



BASHIR ALI ABBAS

AS THE second Trump administration consolidates itself, Arab media has found the President's Middle East appointees a "confusing group of loyalists", even as Israeli media has been startled by picks such as Michael DiMino, the new Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East who is vocally opposed to war with Iran and advocates a diplomatic approach in the region.

Trump's other picks such as Marco Rubio for Secretary of State and Mike Waltz for National Security Advisor are known hawks on Iran. (The nominee for Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth awaits Senate confirmation.)

Besides the (now paused) war in Gaza, how to deal with Iran will be the most prominent question for US Middle East policy in Trump 2.0. How has the region changed since Trump was last in the Oval Office (2017-21), and what factors could determine the alignment or divergence between Tehran and Washington now?

Iran and Trump 2.0

Iran's situation has evolved significantly since Trump 1.0. The anti-Israel 'Axis of Resistance' has been greatly weakened, especially over the past year. But Tehran has cultivated a new positive relationship with its Arab neighbours that sprang from the Saudi-Iran rapprochement brokered by China in 2023.

Within Iran, a major shift has taken place. The economic and social tumult in the country worsened under President Ebrahim Raisi (2021-24), a conservative hardliner who at the time of his death last May had been in the race to succeed Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as Supreme Leader.

Under President Masoud Pezeshkian, Tehran has megaphoned its desire to engage with the West to lift sanctions, while also warning against underestimating its military capabilities and projecting a position of strength through nuclear enrichment.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos on January 22, Iran's Vice President for Strategic Affairs Javad Zarif said he hoped Trump's second term would see a more "rational" approach towards Iran to ensure regional stability.

But in their statements following Trump's inauguration, both Zarif and Iran's headline leaders have made it clear that they should



President Donald Trump in Riyadh in May 2017. *The New York Times*; (left) Iran's Vice President for Strategic Affairs Javad Zarif in Davos on January 22. AP



not be seen as being weak.

It is evident that Tehran is looking for signals from Washington, even as it prepares for a return of the Trump 1.0 policy of "maximum pressure" through more sanctions.

Importantly, Zarif said he believed that the 2018 decision to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal was imposed on Trump by hawks such as former NSA John Bolton and former US Special Representative for Iran Brian Hook.

Bolton, Hook, and Hook's former boss Mike Pompeo, who was Secretary of State from 2018-20, have not found a place in the second Trump administration. On January 23, two days after DiMino's appointment as the Pentagon's Middle East policy chief, the security protections of all three men were pulled.

Government affiliated Iranian media have viewed all these as positive signs of change.

Changes in the region

When Trump first took office in 2017, the Arab world's relationship with Iran was crisis-ridden.

In 2016, Saudi Arabia and Iran had broken diplomatic ties over the execution of Sheikh Nimr, a Saudi Shia cleric. In 2017, Saudi Crown

mit in Riyadh, MBS warned Israel against attacking Iran. Arab officials expect that Trump in his second term will recognise the new realities in the Middle East. The Saudi Foreign Minister this week said he did not believe the US would encourage war with Iran.

Weighing engagement

The ceasefire in Gaza has created conditions for deliberation and contact between Iran and the US. The Trump administration is pushing Israel to withdraw from Lebanon as per the schedule agreed with Hezbollah, denying the Israel Defence Forces the extension that the previous Biden administration had promised.

The question is how Tehran and Washington could engage under Trump with neither party having to lose face before their conservative constituencies. Trump remains strongly pro-Israel, and had ordered the first significant direct attack on Iran's extra-territorial capabilities with the assassination of Maj Gen Qassem Soleimani in Iraq in 2020. The constituency in Iran that Soleimani represented still exists.

Whether "maximum pressure" returns will be also subject to the consideration of how new sanctions on Iran might affect global energy markets, which are already strained by US sanctions on Russia — one reason why the Biden administration did not strictly enforce oil-related macro-level sanctions on Iran.

At a press conference in New York in September 2024, then candidate Trump had appeared to make an overture to Iran: "We have to make a deal [with Iran] because the consequences are impossible. We have to make a deal."

Trump's (and Iran's) dual perspectives notwithstanding, there is indeed some space for an alignment of objectives. The potential full withdrawal of US troops from Iraq, for example, is in line with both Trump's anti-war objectives and Tehran's goal of "expelling" "occupiers" from the region. Iran's desire for a reduced US military presence in the Middle East aligns with Trump's larger political philosophy.

As Israel lobbies for a harsher US line against Iran in return for accommodating Trump's demands in Gaza and Lebanon, the Arab states present their rapprochement with Iran as the key variable for stability in the region, which requires US support and Israeli cooperation to be preserved.

The question is whether Trump will reconcile with a changed Middle East, or whether it will be the other way round.

Bashir Ali Abbas is a Senior Research Associate at the Council for Strategic and Defense Research, New Delhi

Israeli troops to stay in south Lebanon beyond Sunday's ceasefire deadline

REUTERS

JERUSALEM, BEIRUT, JAN 24

ISRAELI FORCES will remain in southern Lebanon beyond a 60-day deadline stipulated in a ceasefire deal with Hezbollah because its terms have not been fully implemented, the Israeli prime minister's office said on Friday.

Under the agreement, which took effect on Nov. 27, Hezbollah weapons and fighters must be removed from areas south of the Litani River and Israeli troops should withdraw as the Lebanese military deploys into the region, all within a 60-day timeframe, meaning by Sunday at 4 am. The deal, brokered by the United States and France, ended more than a year of hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah. The fighting peaked with a major Israeli offensive that left Hezbollah severely weakened and displaced more than 1.2 million people in Lebanon.

In a statement, Israel's PMO said the military's withdrawal was "contingent on the Lebanese army deploying in southern Lebanon and fully and effectively enforcing

the agreement, while Hezbollah withdraws beyond the Litani".

"Since the ceasefire agreement has not yet been fully enforced by the Lebanese state, the gradual withdrawal process will continue, in full coordination with the United States."

The statement did not say how much longer Israeli forces might remain in south Lebanon, where the Israeli military says it has been seizing Hezbollah weapons and dismantling infrastructure used by the armed group.

There was no immediate comment from Lebanon.

A Hezbollah official, asked for comment, referred Reuters to a statement issued by the group on Thursday. This said that any delay of the withdrawal would be an unacceptable breach of the agreement and put the onus on the Lebanese state to act. It said the state would have to deal with such a violation "through all means and methods guaranteed by international charters".

The Israeli military said in a statement that it is "continuing to operate in accordance with the ceasefire understandings between Israel and Lebanon".

Belarus polls: 'Europe's last dictator' all set for 7th term

ASSOCIATED PRESS

MINSK, JANUARY 24

THE LAST time Belarus staged a presidential election in 2020, authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko was declared the winner with 80% of the vote. That triggered cries of fraud, months of protests and a harsh crackdown with thousands of arrests.

With many of his political opponents either jailed or exiled



Alexander Lukashenko was first elected in 1994

abroad, the 70-year-old Lukashenko is back on the ballot, and when the election concludes on Sunday, he is all but certain to add a seventh term.

Although Lukashenko's cur-

rent term doesn't expire until summer, the election was moved up in what officials said would allow him "to exercise his powers at the initial stage of strategic planning."

Belarusian political analyst Valery Karbalevich gave a different reason, saying "There won't be mass protests in freezing January," he said.

Belarus was part of the Soviet Union until its collapse in 1991. The Slavic nation of 9 million people is sandwiched between

Russia and Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, the latter three all NATO members. It was overrun by Nazi Germany in World War II.

It's been closely allied with Moscow and Russian President Vladimir Putin — himself in power for a quarter century.

Lukashenko, a former state farm director, was first elected in 1994, riding public anger over a catastrophic plunge in living standards after chaotic and painful free-market reforms. He

promised to combat corruption.

Throughout his rule, he's relied on subsidies and political support from Russia, allowing it to use Belarusian territory to invade Ukraine in 2022 and later agreeing to host some of Russia's tactical nuclear weapons.

Lukashenko was dubbed "Europe's last dictator" early in his tenure, and he has lived up to that nickname, harshly silencing dissent and extending his rule through elections that the West has called neither free nor fair.

Foreign borrowings turn dearer for India Inc as Rupee falls

GEORGE MATHEW

MUMBAI, JANUARY 24

THE FALL in the rupee's value is expected to increase the financial burden on Indian companies that have borrowed funds from overseas lenders. With the rupee depreciating, these companies that benefited from the Reserve Bank's then borrower-friendly foreign exchange management and the resultant strong rupee, will now have to shell out more money to repay their foreign debts.

Furthermore, companies that have not hedged their overseas borrowings to compensate for the rupee's decline could incur significant losses. The ongoing depreciation of the rupee will erode the value of their repayments, leaving them with a substantial financial shortfall.

This development is likely to

ECB REGISTRATIONS

	Amount*	Number
FY24	49.209	1,221
FY23	26.629	1,102
FY22	39.886	1,104
FY21	35.255	1,076
FY20	52.932	1,333

*In US dollar billion Source:RBI

have far-reaching implications for Indian companies that have relied heavily on external commercial borrowings (ECBs) to fund their operations. As the rupee continues to weaken, these companies, which raised funds when the rupee was stable at around 82-83, will be forced to reassess their financial strategies and explore ways to mitigate the impact of the currency's decline.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

WON'T DISCUSS WRESTLING, SAYS SINGH; WORK CAN HAPPEN FROM WHERE ITS PEOPLE ARE, SAYS TREASURER

Wrestling federation office is back to its old address — home of sexual harassment accused Brij Bhushan Singh

Office moved out after WFI suspended in 2023 but now new tenant at that address

NIHAL KOSHIE
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 24

THE WRESTLING Federation of India (WFI) office is back to functioning at its old address — the long-time home of its former chief and five-time BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh at 21, Ashoka Road.

Though Singh didn't contest last year's Lok Sabha elections amid accusations of sexual harassment by some of the country's top women wrestlers against him, he continues to live here when in New Delhi. His son Karan Bhushan Singh was



Former WFI chief and BJP ex-MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh

elected from the family seat of Kaiserganj in Uttar Pradesh.

Even as the sexual harassment trial against Singh goes on in a Delhi court and charges against him have been framed, the WFI, it is evident, hasn't snapped ties with the politician-turned-sports administrator.

This, despite the Sports Ministry, while suspending WFI



Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh's residence at 21, Ashoka Road. Abhinav Saha; (right) the WFI office in Hari Nagar a few months ago. The WFI board has since been removed. Express

in December 2023, mentioning that running the federation from within "premises controlled by former officer bearers" was one

of the reasons for their action.

Also, according to a Delhi Police chargesheet, two wrestlers had alleged that incidents of in-



Within weeks of the action against them by the ministry in 2023, the WFI had moved to a one-room premises in Hari Nagar. In fact, on the homepage of WFI's official website, the address is still listed as 101, Hari Nagar, Ashram Chowk, New Delhi-110014.

When *The Indian Express* visited this address last July, the nameplate at the building entrance and the door of the small room had WFI written on it. However, the door was locked. The owner of the office space said that WFI had vacated the place.

Returning to the bustling commercial building Wednesday, *The Indian Express* found that 101, Hari Nagar has a new tenant who said WFI had moved out "many

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2