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THE HINDU ANALYSIS

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**US SANCTIONS ON
INDIA**





US Sanctions on Russian Oil

India warns against 'double standards' over Russian oil

Centre responds to U.S. Bill seeking to impose duties on countries buying Russian oil, and threat from NATO chief; Petroleum Minister says the sanctions will be 'dealt with' when they are passed

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

India on Thursday cautioned against "double standards", even as U.S. lawmakers consider a Bill that would impose 500% duties on India and other countries buying Russian oil.

The comments by the External Affairs Ministry come after indications that U.S. President Donald Trump is backing the Russian Sanctions Act, 2025, introduced by Republican Senator Lindsey Graham. Mr. Trump had even threatened secondary tariffs of 100% on countries that continue trade on sanctioned Russian products.

On Wednesday, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, who met with Mr. Trump and members of

Strong stand

The 'Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025', expected to be introduced in U.S. Congress in August, mandates 500% duties on goods and services from countries buying Russian oil

What the NATO chief said

■ India, China, and Brazil should tell Vladimir Putin to be serious about peace talks with Ukraine

■ Continuing to do business with Russia will 'slam back' on these countries

■ The secondary sanctions by U.S. will hit these countries 'very hard'

Centre's response

■ Securing energy needs is an 'overriding priority' for the government

■ India is guided by what markets offer and global circumstances

■ Maintain caution against double standards on the matter

the U.S. Congress, also issued a threat, in particular to China, India, and Brazil, who are among the top buyers of Russian crude oil, oil products, and coal. "Beijing and Delhi" should push Russian President Vladimir Putin towards

ending the war in Ukraine, or face tariffs, the chief of the military alliance said.

Responding to questions on the issue, the External Affairs Ministry said it was following the developments closely. "Securing the energy needs of our

people is understandably an overriding priority for us. In this endeavour, we are guided by what is there on offer in the markets, as also by the prevailing global circumstances," spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said. "We would particularly caution against any double standards on the matter," he added.

'Diverse sources'

At an industry event in Delhi on Thursday, Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri said India would "deal" with sanctions when they are passed, pointing out that India has diversified its supply sources, buying oil from about 40 countries now, as opposed to 27 in the past.

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CONTEXT ?

- ❑ India has cautioned against **U.S.-backed sanctions** targeting buyers of **Russian oil**, following a proposed **Russian Sanctions Act, 2025**.
- ❑ The Bill seeks to impose **500% duties** on countries like India, China, and Brazil, triggering diplomatic responses and debates over **energy security**.

India Responds to U.S. and NATO Pressure

- ❑ The proposed **Russian Sanctions Act, 2025**, introduced in the **U.S. Congress**, seeks **500% ad valorem duties** on countries trading in Russian **oil and petro-products**.
- ❑ **NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte** warned **India, China, and Brazil** to stop buying Russian energy or face tariffs.
- ❑ **MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal** stressed India's **energy needs** and warned against "**double standards**" in global diplomacy.
- ❑ **Petroleum Minister Hardeep Puri** stated India would "**deal with sanctions**" if passed and highlighted India's shift from 27 to **40 oil source countries**.



Equal Inheritance Rights

SC upholds equal inheritance rights for tribal women

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 17

THE SUPREME Court Thursday held that a tribal woman would be entitled to an equal share in ancestral property. The SC observed that denying a female heir right in the property unless otherwise prescribed in law only exacerbates gender division and discrimination, which the law should weed out.

In the absence of a specific law governing intestate succession among Scheduled Tribes, Justices Sanjay Karol and Joymalya Bagchi invoked the principle of "justice, equity and good conscience", extending the provisions of the Central Provinces Laws Act, 1875 to the case and set aside the July 1, 2022 judgement of the Chhattisgarh HC, which had upheld the lower court order denying her the inheritance rights.

The appellants, who approached the SC challenging the HC order, were legal heirs of one Dhaiya, a woman from a Scheduled Tribe. Their mother was one of the six children — five sons and one daughter, of Bhajju alias Bhanjan Gond. They sought partition of a property belonging to their maternal grandfather, stating that their mother is entitled to an equal share in the scheduled property.

The court noted that the parties not being covered by any other inheritance law, the 1875 Act would apply. Though an argument was raised that the 1875 Act has been repealed in 2018, the bench pointed out that it has a clause which protects transactions before the repeal date.

"So, the right having been accrued in favour of the appellant-plaintiffs' mother upon the death of her father, which was approximately 30 years before the filing of the plaint became crystallised and would not be affected by the fact that the Act was no longer in the statute book," Justice Karol said writing for the Bench.

Context ?

- ❑ In a landmark ruling that has become major india news, the **Supreme Court** declared that **tribal women** cannot be denied **ancestral property** solely based on gender.
- ❑ This judgement ensures **constitutional equality** in **tribal inheritance** cases and reverses earlier rulings that had upheld **patriarchal customs** over women's rights, marking a significant step forward for tribal women inheritance.

Supreme Court's Key Observations and Ruling

- ❑ The **Supreme Court bench**, comprising Justices **Sanjay Karol** and **Joymalya Bagchi**, ruled in favour of a **Scheduled Tribe (ST) woman** from **Chhattisgarh** claiming inheritance from her **maternal grandfather**, highlighting the importance of tribal women inheritance rights.
- ❑ It held that **gender-based denial** of property to tribal women is **unconstitutional and unjust**, challenging traditional male-dominated inheritance practices.
- ❑ The Court stated that **equal rights** for women must be upheld in **tribal succession**, even in the **absence of codified personal laws**, emphasizing the need for gender equality in tribal communities.
- ❑ It criticized lower courts for expecting women to **prove the existence of inclusive customs**, instead of requiring the opposing party to prove **exclusionary customs** that favor male inheritance.
- ❑ The ruling emphasized that **customs cannot override constitutional guarantees**, especially **Article 14** and **Article 15(1)**, which protect the inheritance rights of tribal women.

Broader Implications for Tribal Gender Justice

- ❑ The verdict sets a **progressive precedent** for **gender equality** in **tribal communities**, where inheritance is often governed by unwritten customs that have historically favored male heirs.
- ❑ It dismantles the **patriarchal assumption** that women are excluded from succession by default in tribal societies, challenging long-standing male-centric practices.
- ❑ The ruling reinforces that **constitutional principles override unjust traditions**, especially in matters of **livelihood and property**, ensuring that tribal women inheritance rights are protected.
- ❑ It calls for **scrutiny of customary practices** that **deny equal rights**, especially when not codified or legally recognized, potentially leading to more equitable tribal inheritance systems.
- ❑ This judgment may trigger **greater awareness and assertion** of **property rights by tribal women** across India, empowering them to claim their rightful inheritance.

About the Tribal Laws and Constitutional Protections:

● **Hindu Succession Act, 1956**, does **not apply** to **Scheduled Tribes**, leaving succession to be governed by **tribal customs** unless otherwise legislated.

● **Article 14** of the Indian Constitution guarantees **equality before law**, forming the basis of the SC's judgment on tribal women inheritance.

● **Article 15(1)** prohibits the State from **discriminating on grounds of sex**, relevant in denying property to women, including tribal women.

● The principle of **justice, equity, and good conscience** applies when **customary law is silent or unclear** on matters such as tribal women inheritance.

● **Tribal autonomy** in personal laws cannot justify **discrimination** or the **denial of fundamental rights**, including inheritance rights for tribal women.

Poshan Tracker App

Glitches in Poshan app hindering beneficiaries' registration in Haryana

Ashna Butani
ROHTAK

After completing her pre-school duty, Usha Rani, a 47-year-old anganwadi worker, walked through the winding alleys of Marodhi Jattan village in Rohtak, Haryana, to meet her assigned beneficiaries - seven pregnant women and three lactating mothers - and get them registered on the Poshan Tracker app for availing dietary benefits.

The facial recognition of her beneficiaries on the app, made mandatory by the Centre since July 1, has been pending. Ms. Rani tried numerous times to get them registered, but an 'error' message popped up every time. The anganwadi worker apologised to the beneficiaries for the inconvenience and told them



An anganwadi worker trying to register a beneficiary on the Centre's Poshan Tracker app in Rohtak, Haryana. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

she would try to get them registered soon so that they can avail themselves of the take-home ration and other benefits.

The Union Ministry of Women and Child Development has directed anganwadi workers to complete the authentication of beneficiaries, which in-

cludes facial recognition and Aadhaar e-KYC on the Poshan Tracker app. The initiative is for monitoring the implementation of Poshan Abhiyaan, a health scheme to improve the nutrition parameters in children and women.

The Ministry has also ordered registration of all be-

neficiary children through their guardians' or parents' Aadhaar cards on the app.

Under the scheme, anganwadi workers and helpers are tasked to provide supplementary nutrition for infants, lactating and pregnant mothers, pre-school education, health check-ups and immunisation for children up to six years.

Ms. Rani said getting the beneficiaries registered on the app is not as easy as it seems. She mentioned that in some cases, the app fails to register the women beneficiary's face.

Moreover, there are a few cases of the beneficiary's name being misspelt on their Aadhaar card, which the app does not accept.

Another anganwadi

worker, Sushila, 44, who does not know how to operate a smartphone and relies on her daughter, Monika, 22, for help, said that poor Internet connectivity at some places and technical glitches in the app at times are other hurdles.

"In one case, we tried for more than 30 minutes to get the facial recognition of the beneficiary done. We attempted multiple angles and locations, but in vain," said Ms. Sushila.

A pregnant woman in the village, who did not wish to be named, said, "My husband has lost his mobile phone, and my Aadhaar card was linked to his number, as I do not have a phone. To register on the Poshan app, my husband's number must be active. I have stopped receiving the dietary supple-

ments as I am not registered on the app."

Digital divide

While the Ministry has maintained that integrating technology into its programmes ensures that benefits reach the last mile swiftly and transparently, the beneficiaries argue that digitisation has only increased their problems.

According to the 'Comprehensive Modular Survey: Telecom, 2025' by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 74.2% of women in rural Haryana have access to a mobile phone, against 94% men.

Ms. Rani said she wants to keep up with digitisation, but anganwadi workers have not received any specific training for this purpose.

Context

- ❑ Anganwadi workers in Haryana are facing technical challenges in registering pregnant and lactating women on the Poshan Tracker app, delaying access to nutritional benefits under the Poshan Abhiyaan scheme.

Poshan Tracker App

- ❑ Developed by the *Union Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD)*, the Poshan Tracker is a real-time digital tool for monitoring service delivery and nutritional outcomes under the *PoshanAbhiyaan* (launched in 2018).
- ❑ It mandates **facial recognition** and **Aadhaar e-KYC** for authentication of beneficiaries, including children through guardians' Aadhaar.

Role of Anganwadi Workers

- ❑ Anganwadi workers are frontline service providers under the *Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)*.
- ❑ Their duties include registering beneficiaries, ensuring nutrition supplementation, immunisation, and pre-school education.

The infographic is titled '#AatmaNirbharBharatKaBudget MISSION POSHAN 2.0 & SAKSHAM ANGANWADI'. It features a portrait of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the right. The top left corner has the logo of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, with the tagline 'Towards a new dawn'. The main content consists of five numbered points, each with a corresponding icon:

- 1** 2 lakh Anganwadis to be upgraded as 'Saksham Anganwadis' (Icon: School building)
- 2** Nutritional norms and standards to be improved (Icon: Apple and checklist)
- 3** Quality and testing of Take-home Ration to be strengthened (Icon: Ration card and gear)
- 4** Traditional community food habits to be promoted (Icon: Bowl of food)
- 5** Delivery of food under the Supplementary Nutrition Program to be optimised (Icon: Hand holding a bowl)

Akash Prime Missile

Akash Prime successfully tested in Ladakh by Army

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

To further strengthen the air defence system, the Army has carried out successful trials of the indigenously developed air defence system "Akash Prime" in Ladakh.

A senior official confirmed that the Army Air Defence Corps conducted the trials in collaboration with senior scientists from the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), which developed the missile system.

The two-day trial was conducted at an altitude of over 15,000 feet in eastern Ladakh. The Akash Prime scored two direct hits on fast-moving aerial targets in the rarefied high-altitude atmosphere.



On top: The Army carried out successful trials of the indigenously developed air defence system in Ladakh. X/DRDO

The latest version of the Akash system would form the third and fourth regiments of the Akash air defence systems in the Indian Army. The Akash air defence system is a medium-range, surface-to-air missile platform.

Prithvi-II and Agni-I

The Ministry of Defence on Thursday confirmed that

short-range ballistic missiles – Prithvi-II and Agni-I – were successfully test-fired from the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, Odisha.

The launches validated all operational and technical parameters. These tests were conducted under the aegis of the Strategic Forces Command, added the Ministry.

Context

- ❑ The Indian Army and DRDO successfully conducted **high-altitude trials of the indigenously developed Akash Prime** air defence system in Ladakh, while Prithvi-II and Agni-I ballistic missiles were test-fired from Chandipur.

Akash Prime

- ❑ It is an upgraded version of the Akash surface-to-air missile (SAM) system.
- ❑ It is designed to engage aerial targets such as aircraft, helicopters, UAVs, and cruise missiles at medium range.
- ❑ The recent trials at over 15,000 feet in Ladakh successfully demonstrated its high-altitude operational capability with direct hits on fast-moving aerial targets.

Indigenisation and DRDO Role

- ❑ The system is developed by DRDO and is part of India's broader efforts to enhance indigenous defence manufacturing under initiatives like *Atmanirbhar Bharat* in defence.

Strategic Ballistic Missiles (Agni-I & Prithvi-II)

- ❑ **Agni-I:** A short-range ballistic missile (SRBM) with a range of ~700 km, capable of carrying nuclear warheads. It is road/rail mobile and developed under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP).
- ❑ **Prithvi-II:** Also part of IGMDP, it has a range of ~250–350 km and is a short-range ballistic missile using liquid propulsion. It is primarily used by the Indian Army.

Gaganyaan Mission

A foothold in the cosmos



SOMAK RAYCHAUDHURY

Success of Axiom-4 mission offers invaluable lessons and a powerful impetus for India's space aspirations

THE SAFE RETURN of Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla from the International Space Station as part of the Axiom-4 mission, where he was the pilot among the four-member crew, marks a watershed moment not just for Indian human spaceflight, but for the entire strategic arc of India's space programme.

For the first time since Rakesh Sharma travelled on a Soviet spacecraft in 1984, an Indian has completed a complex scientific mission, in a journey to and from the ISS, spending more than two weeks aboard, this time under the banner of international partnership and indigenous resolve.

The successful conclusion of the Axiom-4 mission, marking another milestone in the burgeoning era of commercial human spaceflight, resonates far beyond the confines of Earth's orbit. For India, a nation rapidly asserting its prowess in the global space arena, this achievement offers invaluable lessons and a powerful impetus, particularly for its ambitious Gaganyaan mission and the grander vision for its future ventures in space.

Axiom-4's journey underscored several critical advancements that are reshaping the space landscape. It highlighted the increasing reliability and capability of private-sector space transportation. This mission, executed with professionalism and a clear focus on its objectives, reinforced the growing accessibility of the low-Earth orbit for a multitude of purposes, from cutting-edge scientific research and technological demonstrations to the nascent but rapidly expanding commercial ventures.

Many Indians were following the mission, among them the young people in schools and colleges across the country, who were born long after Sharma's heroic journey. For them, in addition to the importance of the Indian role model who achieved this rare feat, the journey also showcased the efficiency and necessity of international collaboration, even in commercially driven missions, where diverse expertise works together towards shared objectives.

For India's Gaganyaan mission, which aims to send Indian astronauts into space on an indigenous vehicle, the insights gleaned from Axiom-4 are profoundly relevant. While ISRO's approach is distinctly national, the global landscape of human spaceflight is increasingly collaborative and increasingly driven by the commercial sector.

Axiom Space's declared long-term goal of building its own commercial space station, intended to succeed the ISS, is a bold undertaking. ISRO has already declared India's ambitions to deploy the Bharatiya Antariksh Mission. It plans to, perhaps in the following decade, send Indians to the Moon, maybe even build a base on its surface. Observing the progress of Axiom's efforts, including the challenges they encounter, and the solutions they devise in developing and integrating modules into the ISS, will provide rare invaluable foresight for India.

Axiom-4's experience provides a rich case study in several key areas. Of primary and critical importance is crew training and preparation. Observing how commercial astronauts from various professional backgrounds, who are not necessarily all career military pilots, are rigorously trained and seamlessly integrated into a complex mission profile offers valuable perspectives. India can meticulously refine its own astronaut selection and training methodologies by studying these models. This includes incorporating best practices for physiological adaptation to microgravity and psychological conditioning for isolation. Both simulation-based drills and real-time problem-solving scenarios can enhance the preparedness of Indian "vyomnauts".

Mission operations and logistics present another vital area of learning. Managing a human spaceflight mission involving multiple international partners and commercial entities, as Axiom-4 successfully did, provides an invaluable blueprint for streamlining complex operational flows. This encompasses pre-flight preparations and launch sequences to in-orbit activities, rendezvous and docking procedures, and the critical re-entry and recovery phases. Understanding the intricacies of communication protocols, real-time decision-making under pressure, and robust contingency planning, can significantly help ISRO anticipate potential challenges and optimise its own mission control strategies for Gaganyaan.

Equally important are the areas of technology validation and integration. While Gaganyaan is built upon ISRO's formidable indigenous capabilities and decades of expertise, Axiom-4's reliance on established commercial launch and crew vehicles (like SpaceX's Falcon 9 and Crew Dragon), and its focus on specific in-orbit scientific and commercial objectives, demonstrates how new technologies can be rapidly integrated, tested, and validated in the space environment. This could inspire India to explore strategic partnerships for certain sub-systems or adapt specific commercial methodologies for its own technological development and validation processes.

If it hasn't already, the public visibility and success of this mission will inspire and strengthen international collaboration. As the global space community becomes more interconnected, missions like Axiom-4 highlight

the benefits of pooling resources, expertise, and technological capabilities. This mission's success will certainly accelerate private-sector participation, demonstrating the viability and potential profitability, encouraging more Indian companies to invest in space infrastructure, services, and human spaceflight support. This could lead to a thriving ecosystem of Indian suppliers, manufacturers, and service providers for future missions.

The transition from short-duration missions like Gaganyaan to a continuous human presence requires mastering complex logistics, radiation protection, and psychological support for astronauts, all areas where these new transnational collaborations can offer insights. Axiom Space's declared long-term goal of building its own commercial space station, intended to succeed the ISS, is a bold undertaking. ISRO has already declared India's ambitions to deploy the Bharatiya Antariksh Mission. It plans to, perhaps in the following decade, send Indians to the Moon, maybe even build a base on its surface. Observing the progress of Axiom's efforts, including the challenges they encounter, and the solutions they devise in developing and integrating modules into the ISS, will provide rare invaluable foresight for India.

In essence, the successful conclusion of Axiom-4 is not just a triumph for commercial spaceflight; it is a beginning for the space ambitions of a nation such as India. It underscores that human spaceflight is no longer solely the domain of a few state-funded agencies but is evolving into a more dynamic, collaborative, and commercially viable enterprise. One can only hope that these ventures will also support purely scientific projects such as the planned ISRO missions to look for life by studying the atmospheres of extra-solar planets, or detect gravitational waves from space.

By meticulously studying its successes and drawing pertinent lessons, India can not only ensure the triumphant realisation of Gaganyaan, but also confidently chart a course for an even more ambitious and impactful future in the cosmos. The stars, it seems, are increasingly within reach, and India is well-positioned to seize its moment.

The writer is vice-chancellor and professor of Physics, Ashoka University. Views are personal

Context

The return of Group Captain **Shubanshu Shukla from the Axiom-4** mission to the International Space Station (ISS) marks India's first crewed commercial spaceflight, signaling a milestone in its human spaceflight programme.

Strategic Milestones and National Implications

- ❑ Group Captain Shubanshu Shukla's participation in the Axiom-4 mission represents the first instance of an Indian serving on a commercial human spaceflight, symbolizing India's deepening role in global crewed space exploration.
- ❑ The mission underscores India's potential in adapting to rigorous international space standards and validates the reliability of private-sector space transportation in complex scientific missions.
- ❑ By learning from international collaboration, especially through Axiom's methodologies and logistics, India strengthens its roadmap for the Gaganyaan mission and future low-Earth orbit (LEO) missions.

THE AXIOM-4 MISSION



From:
Kennedy Space Centre, Florida

Crew:
Peggy Whitson (Commander, US),
Shubhanshu Shukla (Pilot, India),
Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski (Mission Specialist Poland),
Tibor Kapu (Mission Specialist, Hungary).

KEY EXPERIMENTS

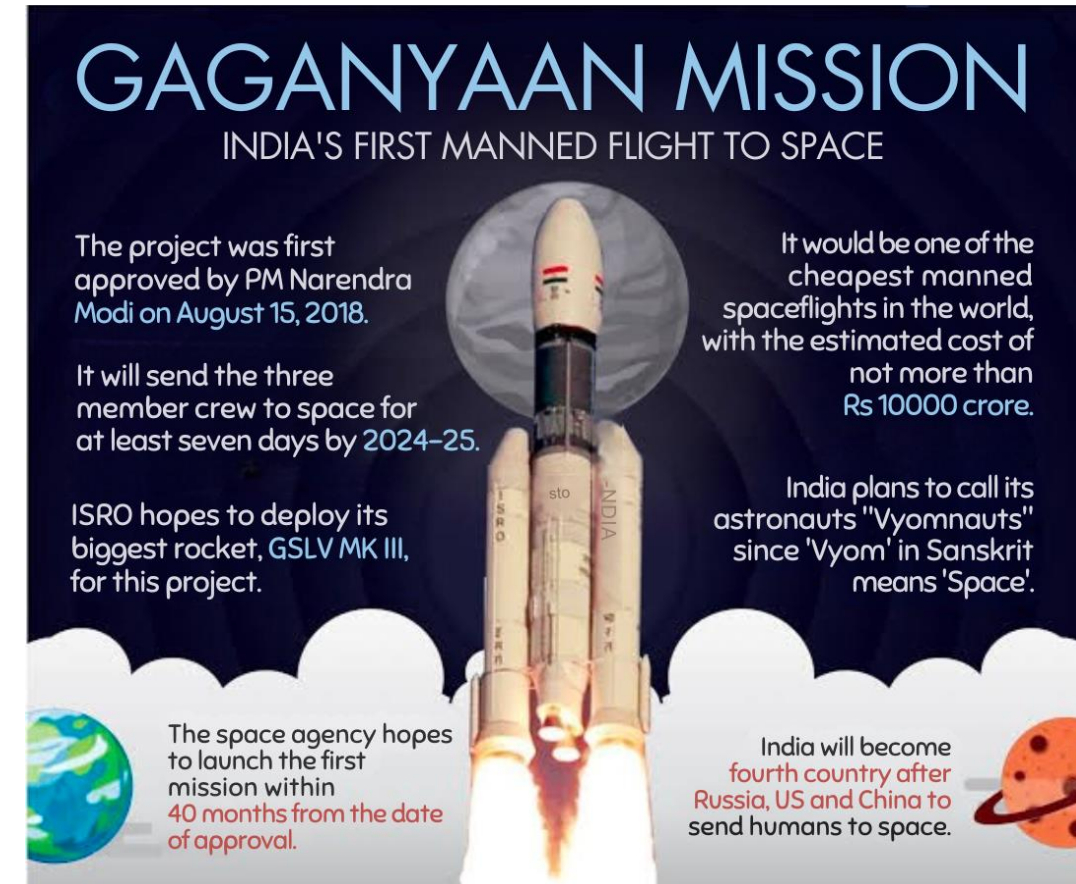
- Physical and cognitive impact of using computer screens in microgravity, particularly how pointing tasks, gaze fixation and rapid eye movements are affected in space
- Behaviour and response of tardigrades, or water bears, in space. Known to survive in very tough conditions, behaviour of tardigrades can offer clues to molecular mechanisms that help survival in extreme environments.
- Impact of spaceflight on six varieties of crops
- Growth and cellular responses in cyanobacteria in microalgae. The results of these studies can help in development of life support systems in future spacecraft.



Artist's impression of a Crew Dragon approaching the forward port of Harmony on the ISS. Image: Wikimedia commons

Key Learnings from Axiom-4 and Global Synergies

- ❑ Axiom-4 offers critical insights into multidisciplinary crew training involving non-career military professionals, thereby expanding the scope of future Indian astronaut profiles.
- ❑ The mission highlights methods to manage microgravity-induced physiological changes, psychological conditioning, and real-time problem-solving essential for India's human spaceflight ambitions.
- ❑ Exposure to advanced launch sequencing, pre-mission simulations, and integration with international modules improves ISRO's mission management capacities.



Future Outlook and India's Strategic Positioning

- ❑ Axiom Space's aim to replace the ISS with a commercial space station aligns with India's aspirations under the Bharatiya Antariksh Mission, offering avenues for private-sector partnerships.
- ❑ The Gaganyaan project, supported by Indian private firms and global companies like SpaceX and Blue Origin, is expected to evolve into a broader programme involving Moon bases and low-Earth orbit infrastructure.
- ❑ While leveraging global cooperation, India aims to secure long-term strategic autonomy through indigenous space technology, sustainable astronaut training, and eventual independent orbital platforms.





Thank you

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