

Failed rocket launch threatens India's space ambitions

December 26 2010, by Naseeb Chand

The [explosion of an Indian space rocket](#) is likely to hit the country's efforts to push further into the global market for launching commercial satellites, experts warned Sunday.

The unmanned Geosynchronous Satellite [Launch Vehicle](#) (GSLV) blew up live on television Saturday less than one minute after launch, at the start of a mission to put a communications satellite into orbit.

The accident was the second setback for India this year following the crash in April of a rocket that was meant to showcase domestically built booster technology, from the same site in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

On Sunday, scientists at the Indian space project began their search into the cause of the latest failure.

"Teams are looking at the data to find out the reason for what happened," [Indian Space Research](#) Organisation (ISRO) spokesman S. Satish said. "A failure analysis committee is likely to be constituted in the next one or two days."

The GSLV veered from its intended flight path and was intentionally blown up 47 seconds after take-off at a height of about eight kilometres (five miles) over the Bay of Bengal.

Experts called on the ISRO to go back to drawing board with the

1.75-billion-rupee (39-million-dollar) GSLV before attempting to offer the rocket as a platform for international satellite launches.

They also warned that India's ambitions to send its first manned space flight in 2016 were under threat.

"Saturday's failure will certainly produce delays," space scientist M.N. Vahia told the Times of India.

"If my payload was being flown on this mission using a GSLV, I would certainly want this [rocket](#) to be tested and evaluated more thoroughly.

"What happened is unnerving as India's reputation as a reliable space launching country has taken a serious dent."

India first staked its claim for a share of the lucrative commercial satellite-launch market by sending an Italian satellite into orbit in 2007.

In 2008, it launched an Israeli spy [satellite](#) and separately put a probe on the moon's surface in an event that the ISRO hoped would give the country international recognition in the space business.

U.R. Rao, a former ISRO chairman, urged India not to be put off by the recent setbacks.

"There's always a general worry and unhappiness when a launch fails. But we can't allow that to bog us down," he said. "We have to zero in on the problem and work out an appropriate solution."

India sees its [space](#) exploration programme as an achievement that underlines its emergence as a major world economy, and many Indians take great patriotic pride in its development.

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