

Countdown begins for Indo-French satellite launch

February 23 2013



India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C21 blasts off at Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh state in September. A countdown has begun for next week's launch of an Indian rocket that will carry seven satellites into orbit, including an Indo-French venture for studying the world's oceans, India's space agency said.

A countdown began Saturday for next week's launch of an Indian rocket that will carry seven satellites into orbit, including an Indo-French

venture for studying the world's oceans, India's space agency said.

The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle will blast off from the Sriharikota [rocket launch](#) centre on Monday, the Press Trust of India quoted an official of the [Indian Space Research Organisation](#) as saying.

The Indo-French satellite is called "SARAL", short for Satellite with ARGOS and ALTIKA—two climate tools developed for analysing ocean currents and sea surface heights by [French space agency](#) CNES.

The rehearsal launch from the island of Sriharikota in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh "was completed satisfactorily", the space agency official said.

During the 59-hour countdown, the rocket's systems will be checked and fuelled.

India, which aims to send its first manned flight into space in 2016, initially staked a claim for a share of the global lucrative commercial satellite-launch market in 2007 when it sent up an Italian orbiter.

The country, which plans up to 10 space missions this year and announced this week plans for an unmanned voyage to Mars, sees its space programme as underscoring its credibility as an emerging world economic power.

The other six satellites being carried into space on Monday comprise two each from Canada and Austria and one each from Denmark and Britain.

One of the Canadian satellites is NEOSSAT or the Near-Earth Object Surveillance Satellite which the [Canadian space agency](#) calls "the world's first space telescope dedicated to detecting and tracking asteroids and satellites".

But India still has a long way to go to catch up in the commercial space arena with rival China which, along with the United States, Russia and the [European Space Agency](#), are already well established.

Monday's planned launch was initially slated for last December but was postponed due to technical hitches.

India's space programme suffered a major setback in late 2010 when a satellite launch vehicle carrying an advanced communications satellite blew up and fell into the Bay of Bengal.

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