

India rocket launches asteroid-spotting satellite

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India's PSLV-C20 satellite launch vehicle, carrying the SARAL Indo-French satellite as one of its payloads, lifts off from the launchpad at Sriharikora on February 25, 2013, in a photo released by the Indian presidential palace. India launched a rocket Monday carrying seven satellites into orbit, including a Canadian orbiter that will scan for asteroids that could be hurtling toward Earth.

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The Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle blasted off from the Sriharikota [rocket launch](#) centre located on an island off the coast of the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

The launch, witnessed by Indian President Pranab Mukherjee at the space mission control centre, "was perfect", Devi Prasad Karnik, an official of the state-run [Indian Space Research Organisation](#), told AFP.

The suitcase-sized Canadian satellite, which the [Canadian Space Agency](#) calls a "sentinel in the sky", will circle the globe every 100 minutes, scanning space to pinpoint asteroids that may come close to Earth.

Information from the satellite could help deflect asteroids whose trajectory might threaten Earth, Canadian space officials say

Earlier this month, an asteroid whizzed safely past Earth the same day a much smaller, previously undetected meteor hit Russia, injuring nearly 1,000 people.



Indian President Pranab Mukherjee (centre), flanked by Andhra Pradesh state Chief Minister Kiran Kumar Reddy (right) and Minister of State for Public Affairs V. Narayanasamy (left), applaud during the successful launch of the PSLV-C20 satellite launch vehicle at Sriharikora on February 25, 2013, in a photo released by the Indian presidential palace.

Near-Earth Object Space [Surveillance Satellite](#) or NEOSSat "will be the only space telescope dedicated to searching for asteroids", Canadian satellite scientist Alan Hildebrand was quoted as saying by India's Hindu newspaper.

The Canadian satellite will also scan for chunks of asteroids, comets and space debris—leftovers from old space missions—that can cause collisions.

The rocket was also carrying an Indo-French satellite called "SARAL", or Satellite with ARGOS and ALTIKA—two climate monitoring tools

developed for analysing ocean currents and sea surface heights by [French space agency](#) CNES.

"We will obtain crucial data for climate models and global ocean currents" from the satellite, said CNES project head Pierre Sengenes.

Learning more about [global ocean circulation](#) is key in understanding how global warming is affecting the planet, scientists say.

The other satellites being carried into space included another one from Canada, two from Austria and one each from Denmark and Britain.

The Indian mission was the 23rd for the country's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle or PSLV.

India, which aims to send its first manned flight into space in 2016, has emerged as a significant player in the lucrative global commercial satellite-launch market, according to space experts.

The Indian space agency has launched 35 foreign satellites since 1999 while the maximum number of satellites ever launched by the PSLV in a single mission stands at 10.

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