



Hindustan Times

FIRST VOICE. LAST WORD.

Three launches in Q1: Isro's '24 plan

Soumya Pillai

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: After a successful 2023 that included historic milestones like Chandrayaan-3, the country's first successful lunar landing, the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) is all set for another busy year with three critical launches scheduled in the first quarter of 2024 itself, senior officials said.

The missions tentatively scheduled for the first three months of 2024 are India's first polarimetry mission X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat), the launch of INSAT-3DS satellites, and Isro's collaborative mission with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, officials said.

The first two of these, will take place in January itself, the senior official from the department of space cited above said.

XPoSat, which was initially planned for launch on the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) late in December, is now expected to be launched around January 1, the official said. XPoSat is India's first dedicated polarimetry mission to study various dynamics of bright astronomical X-ray sources in extreme conditions, providing vital information on the nature and behaviour of celestial objects.

Just a week after that, around January 12, Isro is also planning the launch of INSAT-3DS satellites on-board its launch vehicle, Geosynchronous Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F14), the official said.

The INSAT-3DS mission will carry satellites for the India Meteorological Department (IMD) as part of its series of climate observ-

atory satellites. The mission was initiated as part of a collaboration between Isro and IMD, to improve the network of climate services. Under the multi-mission meteorological data receiving and propulsion system, three dedicated satellites were to be launched. This is the final of the three launches.

"We had a very fruitful 2023 for the space industry. We hope to carry the momentum forward. The number of launches will be more next year, because there will also be a few private launches scheduled," the official said, declining to be named. "But we are also excited about significant missions, including the uncrewed test missions for Gaganyaan."

Officials also said the Nasa-Isro Synthetic Aperture Radar mission (NISAR) is also expected to take flight in the first quarter of 2024, possibly in February or early March.

NISAR, a low earth orbit observatory, is being jointly developed by Nasa and Isro to map the globe in 12 days and provide spatially and temporally consistent data for understanding changes in Earth's ecosystems, ice mass, vegetation biomass, sea-level rise, groundwater and natural hazards.

Isro had a fruitful year with seven launches, starting with the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle-D2 or the Earth Observation Satellite-07 in February. It was also marked by two of the most significant missions in the history of India's space journey—Chandrayaan-3, which marked India's historic landing on the Moon, and the launch of Aditya-L1, the country's first Sun observatory, which is expected to reach its destination by the first week of January.