

SMALL SATELLITE GIVES BIG PUSH TO SCHOOLGIRLS' DREAMS

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Students who developed the payloads for SpaceKidz India's AzaadiSAT-2 at Sriharikota. | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement

On Friday, a large group of schoolgirls waiting at India's spaceport in Sriharikota let out screams of joy as the [Small Satellite Launch Vehicle - SSLV D2](#) - took off. These girls had created payloads for one of the satellites the SSLV D2 carried.

About 750 girl students from across India were guided to develop the payloads for SpaceKidz India's AzaadiSAT-2, which was placed in orbit by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Friday. SpaceKidz is a Chennai-based aerospace start-up.

The girls are from government schools and are studying in classes 8-12. "Most of these girls come from rural pockets and are economically weak. NITI Aayog helped us identify the 75 government schools from where we picked these students. And this is the first time 750 girl students from rural backgrounds have come together for a project of this scale," said Srimathy Kesan, founder and CEO of SpaceKidz.

Students from remote locations like Ganderbal in Jammu and Kashmir were also part of the project. "This is a place where incidents of terrorist violence is reported often and students here hardly go to school. Internet is a concern in some zones here. Despite these issues we managed to support girls here," Ms. Kesan pointed out. Around 80 girls from Tamil Nadu were also part of the teams that made the payloads.

The girls received training both online and, in some cases, in-person. Experiment materials were sent to these girls and they were guided on how to use it. "SpaceKidz developed basic and simple experiments that students can learn and assemble with the simultaneous support of their science teachers. We told them to work on the payload and send it to us and we assembled it," Ms. Kesan said.

To a query on how the start-up managed funding for this mission, Ms. Kesan said, "Hexaware has been a major sponsor for this satellite and a small contribution came in from Lumina Datamatics. Ananth Technologies supported us with the satellite testing. We are looking to raise 100 crore for our next project," she added.

SpaceKidz India team on Friday said the first signals from the satellite were received just 15 minutes after the separation.

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