

ISRO to test its astronaut escape feature today

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has scheduled a 'pad abort test' of an experimental space crew capsule on Thursday morning as an important cog of its plan to send Indians to space one day.

The launch pad abort test, or PAT, involves aborting a space capsule at launch to save the inmates. It is slated for 7 a.m. at ISRO's Sriharikota launch venue, the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), in coastal A.P.

Astronauts' safety

A two-hour band from 6 a.m. has been slotted for the test, according to information on the website of ISRO's Space Application Centre, Ahmedabad. SAC has provided devices that enable satellite communication and navigation of this flight. ISRO Chairman K.Sivan has been overseeing the preparations at the SDSC for the past two days.

The priority of all space agencies in a human space mission is the safe return of its astronauts. With the pad abort test, ISRO aims to prove its technology that will safely parachute future astronauts down in case their space vehicle develops snags while taking off, a senior ISRO executive said.

First milestone

ISRO describes PAT as the first milestone in qualifying its crew escape system in an emergency. The test is also one of the many main and supporting technologies that the space agency is developing ahead of its ambitious Human Space Flight Programme (HSP).

According to information put together from multiple sources, a roughly 3,770-kg trial crew module, aided by four solid-fuelled rockets built around it, will be flown up to a distance of 2.4 km. On firing, the module will be jettisoned and demonstrate a safe descent with the help of parachutes — all this in around three minutes.

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