

PSLV mission fails, ends dream run

A PSLV flight lasts 19 minutes. Normally the heat shield separates three minutes into launch but ISRO officials apparently waited through the entire flight period before conceding the failure.

“We could see the satellite circling along the orbit with the heat shield,” he said at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre at Sriharikota, from where ISRO launches Indian and foreign commercial satellites.

The unprecedented non-release of the 1425-kg satellite halts a dream run of successful launches of the PSLV. The light lift workhorse booster was the pride of ISRO and a commercial success; its only failure was the first developmental launch of September 1993.

On the one hand, the launch may somewhat dent the image that the PSLV commands in the global small-to-medium lifting launchers market. It has been easily the most-sought-after vehicle for small satellites of up to 600-700 kg. It has launched 209 satellites of 28 countries since it went commercial in 1999.

Antrix Corporation, ISRO's commercial arm, has firmed up many more client satellites, its chief had earlier said. On the other hand, the failure comes even as ISRO attempts to outsource satellite making to domestic industry. The rocket was carrying the satellite that ISRO assembled by involving a consortium of six Indian small and medium industries.

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