India will have four functional launch pads by 2029 – ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan

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News

Speaking at a private university's graduation ceremony in Chennai on 24 Oct 2026 (Saturday), ISRO Chairman Dr V. Narayanan said India will have four functional launch pads by 2029. A dedicated launch complex for the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) is coming up on about 2,000 acres at Kulasekarapattinam, Thoothukudi district. Partnering with private firms is needed to meet the demand for thousands of satellites, but ISRO will not be privatised, he said. Gaganyaan's first uncrewed test flight will take place within two months, followed by two more uncrewed flights; about 8,000 ground tests are done and four astronaut-designates are in training. Chandrayaan-5, with Japan, will carry a 350-kg rover for 100 days of study. (He did not name the other three pads; official records show they are Sriharikota's First, Second and Third Launch Pads.)

Key facts

Statement	24 Oct 2026, Chennai – graduation ceremony – Dr V. Narayanan (ISRO Chairman since Jan 2025)
Existing pads	First Launch Pad (FLP, 1993 – PSLV, SSLV); Second Launch Pad (SLP, 2005 – GSLV, LVM3) – Sriharikota

Third Launch Pad	Union Cabinet, 16 Jan 2025; ₹3,984.86 crore; to be completed in 48 months; for NGLV
Fourth	Kulasekarapattinam (Thoothukudi) – SSLV launch complex; foundation Feb 2024
NGLV	Cabinet, 18 Sep 2024; ₹8,240 crore; up to 30 t to LEO; reusable first stage
Gaganyaan	First uncrewed flight (G1) – humanoid robot 'Vyommitra'

Background

- Sriharikota: a barrier island between Pulicat Lake and the Bay of Bengal in Tirupati district, Andhra Pradesh. The first rocket from here (an RH-125 sounding rocket) flew on 9 Oct 1971. It was renamed 'Satish Dhawan Space Centre – SHAR' on 5 Sep 2002. India's first rocket (Nike-Apache) was launched from Thumba, Keralam, on 21 Nov 1963.
- Science: the Earth spins from west to east, so a rocket launched eastward gains that rotational speed (about 0.46 km/s at the Equator). Launching from the east coast drops spent stages into the sea. From Kulasekarapattinam, polar-orbit launches can head straight south; from Sriharikota they must curve around Sri Lanka, wasting fuel.
- Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV): about 3 times LVM3's payload at 1.5 times the cost; 3 development flights; target 96 months. Goals: Bharatiya Antariksh Station (2035) and an Indian landing on the Moon (2040). The Third Launch Pad will also be a standby for the Second Launch Pad.
- Chandrayaan-5 / LUPEX: a joint mission of ISRO and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA); ISRO builds the lander, JAXA the rover; it will be launched on Japan's H3 rocket from Tanegashima to study water and other resources at the lunar south pole. Government approval came in March 2025.

Tamil Nadu link: the fourth pad is coming up at Kulasekarapattinam, Thoothukudi district – India's second spaceport. ISRO's rocket engines are tested at the ISRO Propulsion Complex (IPRC), Mahendragiri, Tirunelveli district. ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan hails from Kanyakumari district. Pulicat Lake, next to Sriharikota, straddles the Tamil Nadu–Andhra Pradesh border.

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