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XPoSat to be launched on January 1, says Isro

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NEW DELHI: The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) is set to start off the new year with the launch of the country's first polarimetry mission X-ray Polarimeter Satellite or XPoSat, which will make the country only the second in the world after the US to undertake such a mission.

The launch will take place at 9.10am on January 1 from the Sriharikota space port, Isro chairman S Somanath said on Thursday. "The launch has been confirmed. We had a good year and we will be aiming at an even more fruitful 2024," he told HT.

Senior Isro scientists, who have been working on the mission, said that the mission objective is to investigate the polarization of intense x-ray sources.

To be sure, India currently has a well-established space-based x-ray astronomy programme, but through this mission scientists will be able to predominantly focus on imaging, time-domain studies, and spectroscopy, this upcoming mission marks a major value-addition.

"This research, supplementing traditional time and frequency domain studies, introduces a novel dimension to x-ray astronomy, generating anticipation and excitement within the scientific community," the space agency explained in its mission statement. Isro scientists explained that the mission will help them understand and measure emissions from various astronomical sources — black holes, neutron stars, active galactic nuclei, pulsar wind nebulae — that are otherwise challenging to study.