

**INTERCEPTOR MISSILE DESTROYS**  
Indian satellite 300 km above Earth,  
travelling at over 27,000 kmph

**BECOMES FOURTH COUNTRY**  
to have such capability, PM  
says India now a space power

**ANTI-SATELLITE MISSILE TECH**  
a deterrent, not weaponisation  
of space, underlines Govt

## Shooting down live satellite, India enters strategic Space

AMITABH SINHA  
& JOHNSON T A  
PUNE, BENGALURU, MARCH 27

MAKING A surprise announcement shortly after noon Wednesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India had successfully tested an anti-satellite missile, becoming a space power and only the fourth country after the US, Russia and China with the strategic capability to hit and destroy satellites.

A Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) Interceptor developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), similar to the ones that intercept and destroy incoming missiles, was fired Wednesday morning from the Dr A P J Abdul Kalam Island launch complex, off the Odisha coast and south of Balasore. It struck an Indian satellite in low earth orbit, about 300 km from the earth's surface.

ISRO sources said the DRDO missile knocked out a micro satellite called Microsat-R which was launched by ISRO into low earth orbit for the DRDO on January 24 this year. The satellite, sources said, would have been hurtling at a speed of more than 27,000 km per hour.

Given that satellites are critical infrastructure for any country, used as they are for navigation systems, communication, banking networks, stock markets, weather forecasting and a range of military and other civil applications, the ability to destroy enemy satellites is a potent capability that can cripple the enemy.

The entire operation, from



The BMD Interceptor takes off from the Dr A P J Abdul Kalam Island, off Odisha. ANI

INTERVIEW: NIRMALA SITHARAMAN

‘Decision taken in 2014... no country will share or sell this tech, it’s our own’

RITU SARIN  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

THE DECISION to conduct the missile test in space was taken “a few months” after the NDA government took charge in 2014, Union Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Wednesday. Speaking to *The Indian Express*, she dismissed criticism of the Prime Minister making the announcement. “He is the Minister for Space, isn’t he?” she said. “If people are questioning the decision of the PM to address the nation, they should know the importance of this achievement.”

Excerpts:

**As Defence Minister, how do you view today’s successful test of an ASAT?**

It is a major achievement. This is because we are now the fourth in an elite club of nations which have demonstrated capabilities of striking live satellite targets in space. But what I would like to emphasise and what people must understand is that the integrated technology

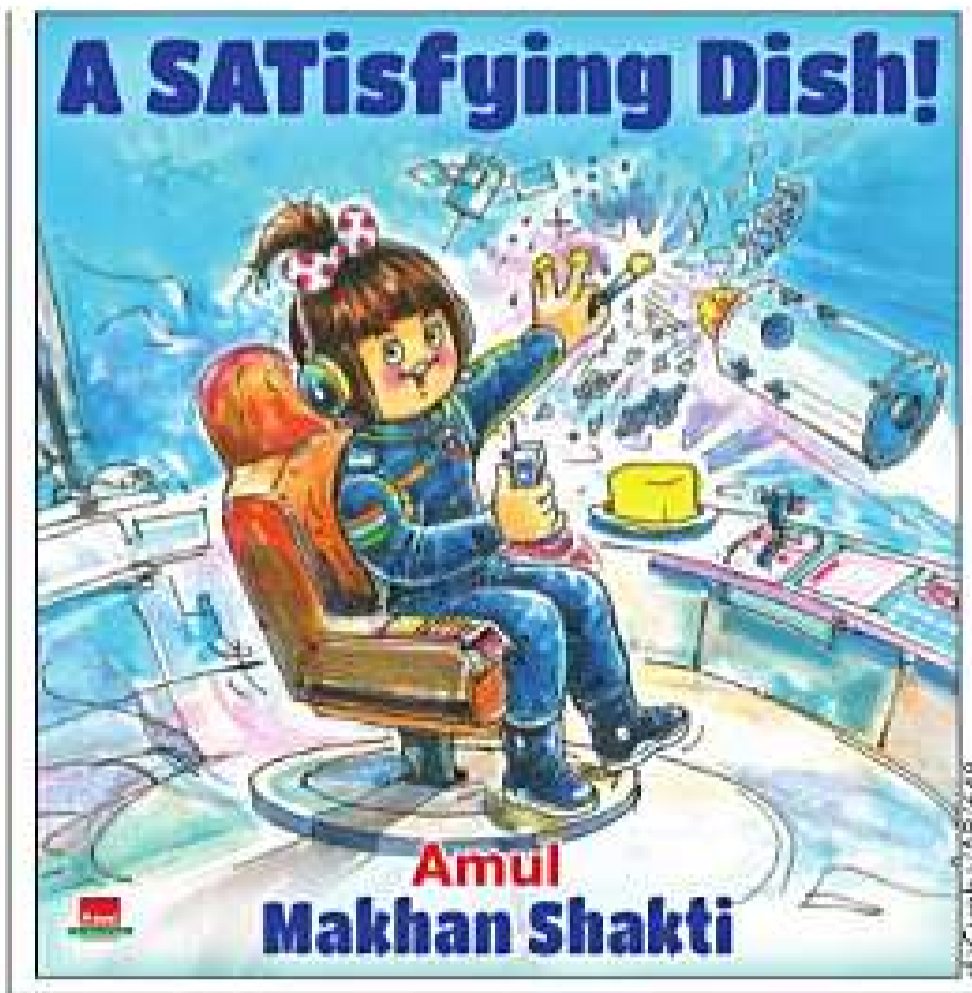


“There are benign satellites... There are malignant satellites and we demonstrated we have the technology and power to target them”  
— NIRMALA SITHARAMAN  
MINISTER OF DEFENCE

INSIDE

**NO SHIFT IN INDIA’S SPACE DOCTRINE, SAY EX-DRDO HEADS**  
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used is something we could not borrow or buy from another country. There is no country which will sell or share this  
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## EC red-flags new poll funding norms to SC: ‘serious impact’

ANANTHAKRISHNAN G  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

RED-FLAGGING the electoral bond scheme, the Election Commission (EC) has told the Supreme Court that it had conveyed to the Centre, in 2017, that the changes made in several laws related to political funding would have “serious repercussions/ impact on the transparency aspect... of funding of political parties”.

In an affidavit filed on March 25, the EC said it had communicated its concerns regarding “certain provisions of the Finance Act, 2017, and the corresponding amendments carried out in the Income Tax Act, the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and the Companies Act, 2013...” to the Union Law Ministry in a letter dated May 26, 2017.

The EC also said that the changes in the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA) “would allow unchecked foreign funding of po-

litical parties in India, which could lead to Indian policies being influenced by foreign companies”.

The affidavit was filed by Vijay Kumar Pande, Director (Law), Election Commission of India, in response to petitions filed by the CPI(M) and the Association for Democratic Reforms, challenging the constitutional validity of the electoral bond scheme.

The Centre had earlier told the court that the decision to introduce electoral bonds was “a big step towards electoral reform” and the process to acquire/encash them would “ensure transparency” and “accountability”.

The EC, however, said the move would take donations received by a political party out of the ambit of reporting them as per provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

It said it had conveyed in its letter that “in a situation where contributions received through electoral bonds are not reported,  
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STRENGTHENS DETERRENCE

## Pokharan parallel: Capability was there but why test was key

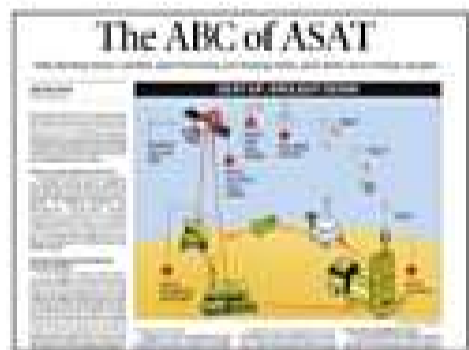
Decision to test political call, not a science one: ex-R&D head at DRDO

AMITABH SINHA  
PUNE, MARCH 27

IN TERMS of scale, significance and international impact, Wednesday’s test of the anti-satellite missile will probably rank several notches lower than the nuclear tests of 1974 or 1998. And yet this test has given India a unique and a critical strategic capability that only three other countries in the world currently possess.

Both in 1974 and 1998, India made a forceful entry into an exclusive club. At least in the case of the 1998 tests, India was only converting a de facto nuclear status into a de jure one. The situation is not very different in the case of anti-satellite missile test carried out Wednesday. India had unveiled its inten-

EXPLAINED



THE WHAT & HOW  
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EXPLAINED

tion to acquire this capability way back in 2010 when the then chief of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) V K Saraswat had announced at a January 5 press conference that such a test was on the anvil.  
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## Oppn complains, EC sets up panel to probe but PM’s address likely to escape the heat

RITIKA CHOPRA  
& RITU SARIN  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi’s address to the nation on the country’s successful anti-satellite missile test was “avoidable”, but may not have violated the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) in the strictest sense, sources in the Election Commission told *The Indian Express*.

The EC, however, directed a committee of four officers Wednesday to examine the mat-



PM interacts with Team Mission Shakti on Wednesday. ANI

ter thoroughly in “light of the Model Code of Conduct” to ensure official machinery and government office were not misused to the advantage of the ruling party. The officers are expected to submit their report this week.

Although the EC’s permission wasn’t sought before the address was aired Wednesday afternoon, sources said the government was under no obligation to approach the panel since it did not directly use public broadcasters — Doordarshan and All India Radio — for the purpose.  
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BUSINESS AS USUAL  
By UNNY



## Preparing for tomorrow’s wars, says Jaitley; Delhi can help shape rules

SHUBHAJIT ROY  
& LIZ MATHEW  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 27

BECOMING THE fourth country in the world to shoot down a satellite in space with an anti-satellite missile, New Delhi Wednesday put itself in a position of advantage when it comes to framing global rules in the future on the prevention of an



Arun Jaitley in New Delhi on Wednesday. Prem Nath Pandey

arms race in outer space.

But hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the test in a public address, the ruling BJP framed the move as “preparedness” for “tomorrow’s wars” — and a “deterrent”.

“We should remember tomorrow’s wars will not be the same as yesterday’s wars. Conventional army, navy, cyber, space... we have to prepare for all  
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## Alleged IS recruit says NIA set up his return, HC calls for cellphone records of officers

SADAF MODAK  
MUMBAI, MARCH 27

SETTING ASIDE a special court order, the Bombay High Court Wednesday directed that summons be issued to nodal officers of five telecom companies for production of phone records of calls exchanged between the mobile numbers of NIA officers and the father of Areeb Majeed, who is facing trial for allegedly travelling to Syria to join the Islamic State in 2014.

In his defence, Majeed has claimed that while the NIA said he was arrested on November 29, 2014, and that he had returned to India to carry out a terror attack, his return, in fact, had been facilitated by the NIA itself. His plea seeking the call detail records (CDRs) of three NIA officers and a number used by his father, Ejaz, had been rejected in January by the special court conducting his trial.

In his appeal to the High Court, Majeed said he had sought the CDRs to demonstrate that the entire arrangement for his arrival had been made by the NIA and only then he came to be arrested.



NIA said Areeb Majeed was arrested in November 2014

The bench of Justices Indrajit Mahanty and A M Badar said: “When the accused has raised a defence that he was in fact brought back to India with all necessary help by the officers of the NIA in consultation with his father, and that, those officers were in contact with his father at the relevant time and were also present at the airport at the time of arrival of the accused, requirement of fair trial necessitates calling of CDRs of the officers of the NIA as well as those of another cell phone number of father of the accused.”

Objecting to the plea, the NIA said it has been made to delay the trial and that at this stage, Majeed is not entitled to the  
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## Midnight to midnight & merger: Political drama Made In Goa

SMITA NAIR  
PANJIM, MARCH 27

IN THE political turmoil that followed the death of Manohar Parrikar, Maharashtra Gomantak Party chief Sudin Dhavalikar was the man of the moment — being wooed by the BJP to prop up the government under a new Chief Minister with three MGP MLAs, including himself. But Dhavalikar took his time — it was said that he had asked for the CM’s chair. In the end, he signed up as

Deputy Chief Minister. But just five days later, he has lost his post, all his portfolios, and his MLAs.

In a stunning turn of events, hours after the last of the urns containing the ashes of Parrikar were immersed in lakes and rivers across Goa, the BJP got Speaker Michael Lobo to open his office at 1 am Wednesday. They had got two MGP MLAs to split and merge with BJP. And by afternoon, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant dropped Dhavalikar from the council of ministers — he had held the plum PWD portfolio among others.

Dhavalikar called it “midnight dacoity by chowkidars” and “a national party wiping out a regional party”. In response, Sawant accused him of breaching an understanding by putting up his own candidates in the three bypolls around the corner. The cracks that were visible after Parrikar’s death were now split wide open.

The numbers summed up the story: With the addition of Deepak Pauskar, who is now a minister, and Manohar Ajaonkar, the BJP is on a par with the Congress with 14 MLAs, with



Sudin Dhavalikar (2nd from left) was made Deputy Chief Minister on March 19. PTI

one coalition partner in Goa Forward and three independents.

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, BJP state president Vinay Tendulkar said: “This was inevitable. Dhavalikar had promised Parrikar that his party would not contest against us in the bypolls. They repeated this during talks with (Union Minister) Nitin Gadkari (after Parrikar’s death). But Sudin’s brother Deepak continues to campaign for the bypoll in Shiroda against the BJP, even though we are coalition partners.”

Tendulkar claimed the two

MGP MLAs “approached us stating that they want a stable government”. “We had asked the Dhavalikar brothers repeatedly to withdraw from contesting against the BJP... You cannot give your word to Nitin Gadkari and continue to contest against BJP,” he said.

Addressing a press conference, CM Sawant said: “He is not following the conditions laid during our alliance... the Common Minimum Programme. I have spoken to them personally, that we will follow the common programme

and according to the programme, they were not supposed to contest Shiroda.”

Kicking off the latest sequence of events, the two MGP MLAs submitted a letter to the Speaker last night stating that they “constitute 2/3rds of the members of the legislature party” and that the “merger shall be deemed to have taken place”. By 2.30 am, the Speaker had issued the order.

The Opposition Congress described the move as a “threat” to all allies of the BJP. But the two  
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