

Over The Moon...



I first found out about the space quiz conducted by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) through the wonderful medium of WhatsApp forwards. I was extremely excited by the prospect of watching the soft landing of Chandrayaan-2 live from the ISRO control room along with the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, and ISRO chief Mr. K. Sivan. After further announcement of the quiz in school, and seeing my friends take part, I decided to give it a shot. After thorough research on the Indian Space Programme, I decided to create an account on the website and start the quiz. As I answered the questions, an unusual excitement grew inside me, for I waited to see the results. As soon as the quiz was done and I pushed the 'view results' button, I saw my result, and jumped up with joy. I rushed to tell my parents that I had scored 100% on the quiz. They were extremely elated and were very hopeful for my selection.

Days passed and I became immersed in schoolwork, and memories of the quiz began to fade. On the evening of 26th September, I got a call from an unknown number. Hesitantly, I answered it and what I heard made me scream at the top of my voice. The call was from the ISRO headquarters, Bengaluru, and the person on the other end informed me that I was selected to watch the landing. A few moments later, I got an email from Dr Suresh MR, an engineer at ISRO, stating the same. I couldn't believe what I read and fervently asked my mother to pinch me, so I could be sure all this was true. In the next few days, I sent Dr. Suresh all my travel details so he could arrange

stay for myself and a guardian at the ISRO guest house. It was decided that I was to go with my father, who also looked forward to the day with intense excitement. Soon, the official results were out, as I proudly looked at my name on the list. The website said that 398 children had secured full marks, and 2 children who did it in the least time were chosen from each state.

When we landed in Bengaluru, we were kindly greeted by Mr. Suresh S, who immediately escorted us to the ISRO guest house. Once I reached the guest house, I met the winners of the quiz who had come from all parts of India. I excitedly met Mr Shajahan, the coordinator for the event as we spoke to him about the mission. After freshening up, all students and guardians were required to assemble in the hall, where reporters from Doordarshan conducted interviews for all students that was telecast live. It was a wonderful experience to see friends from all parts of India share the same passion for science and aerospace as I did, and it took me no time to get acquainted with them and share phone numbers. After the interview concluded, my newfound friends and I took a walk around the campus, marvelling at the beautiful greenery and serenity of nature around the guest house. A few moments later, we were told to get ready to go to the ISRO telemetry, tracking and command network (ISTRAC), wearing the T-shirts and cap provided to us for the event. We were all given passes and were required to bring our ID cards for the big event.

The bus ride to ISTRAC, which was around 45 kilometers from the guest house, was spent pleasantly, as we sung a flurry of patriotic songs and poems. The excitement was at an all time high, when we got down at the ISTRAC. After our IDs were checked, we were ushered in and shown our seats. The inside of the ISTRAC was a marvel, and I felt like a kid in the candy store. We could see the countdown to the landing, the trajectory of the lander (Vikram) and a simulation of the proceedings that would take place. My eyes almost popped out as I saw the ISRO chief Mr. K Sivan approaching us. I touched his feet and shook his hands as he conferred me with his blessings. He had a brief talk with the students and we wished him luck. Beaming, with the support of India with him, he walked away.

We looked on with giddy anticipation as the lander, Vikram completed landing maneuvers. It moved from the rough braking phase, to the fine braking phase, as we marveled on the technological advancements.



Just then, a wave of tension rose over the room, as ISRO lost control with Vikram. I could see everyone get teary eyed and a wave of disappointment spread across all the previously hopeful faces. (As of now, Vikram has been spotted by the orbiter and is intact. ISRO is looking to get communications back on track).

After it was recognized that no further communication would be possible with the Lander immediately, we were ushered out and told to form a semicircle. My heart skipped a beat as I saw the Prime Minister of India approaching. He walked towards us, and interacted with us for a couple of minutes before we were ushered out for a group photo. I was beaming with energy as I smiled at the media. He told all of us to stay courageous and stay positive, and the mission was not a failure.



After the photo, we headed back. Tired but happy, we slept like babies. After we reached the guest house, I dragged myself across to my bed and fell asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow. The next day, we were served a splendid breakfast, after which we bade goodbye to our friends, and left for the airport.

In conclusion, this opportunity was a wonderful exposure for me. I learned a lot about the Indian space missions and about aerospace. I met people I'd only dreamt of seeing and got encouraged to follow my aspirations and dreams. Overall, it was a very inspiring experience, through which I learned that results do not define success, what is important is the process, and we need to keep trying till we reach our goals. This

was only the second time ISRO had sent a GSLV (Geosynchronous Satellite launch vehicle) with a cryogenic engine out of earth's orbit. I learned that we need to continue to aspire and aim higher and higher, and that I, like ISRO must continue to persevere and be the best I can.