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India moon probe on track for lunar orbit

Chandrayaan-1 successfully performed an orbit-raising maneuver

By **K.S. Jayaraman**



updated 5:50 p.m. MT, Wed., Nov . 5, 2008

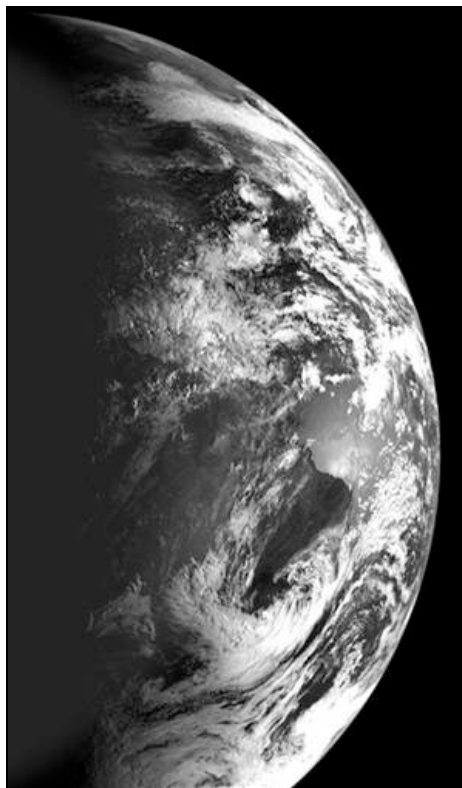
BANGALORE, India - India's Chandrayaan-1 lunar orbiter has successfully tested a vital [camera](#) and performed an orbit-raising maneuver that puts it on course to reach the moon by this weekend.

The Indian Space Research Organisation said Tuesday that Chandrayaan-1, the country's **first-ever moon probe**, entered its lunar transfer trajectory after a fifth and final orbit-raising maneuver carried out early that day. During the maneuver, the spacecraft's rocket engine fired for about 150 seconds, raising its apogee to about 236,121 miles (380,000 km) - the moon's average distance from Earth.

"Chandrayaan-1 will approach the moon on November 8, 2008, and the spacecraft's liquid engine will be fired again to insert the spacecraft into lunar orbit," ISRO officials said. All systems **onboard the spacecraft** are performing normally, they added.

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ISRO

This image of Earth was taken by ISRO's Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft while on its way to the Moon on Oct. 29, 2008.

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map the lunar surface.

ISRO officials unveiled some of the images Friday, revealing a view of Australia from high above Earth. The camera, to be used to map the lunar surface with a ground resolution of 16.4 feet (5 meters), is one of 11 instruments aboard Chandrayaan-1.

Chandrayaan-1 snapped the photos on Oct. 29, spotting first the northern coast of Australia from an altitude of about 5,592 miles (9,000 km) at about 8:00 a.m. Local Time in India. About 4 1/2 hours later, the probe caught country's southern coast from a height of 43,495 miles (70,000 km).

India launched the \$87 million Chandrayaan-1 spacecraft toward the moon on Oct. 22. The lunar orbiter includes a 64-pound (29-kg) impact probe, which it will release to **crash into the lunar surface**, and carries five Indian instruments and six others provided by the U.S., Britain, Sweden, Germany and Bulgaria.

Chandrayaan-1 will join **Japan's Kaguya orbiter** and China's Chang'e 1 spacecraft at the moon when it arrives in lunar orbit this weekend. The Japanese and **Chinese** probes launched in 2007. NASA plans to launch its next moon probe, the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter, in Spring 2009.

SPACE.com staff contributed to this report from New York City.

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