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Now German satellite hurtling towards Earth by Ritika Sharma

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Barely weeks after the Upper Atmosphere Research Satellite's (UARS) plunged into the Pacific Ocean, a second piece of space debris is racing towards the Earth and could hit the planetâ€™s surface early next month. According to German space agency, there is one-in-2000 chance the debris could hit any person or structure. The risk is risk than what was estimated for UARS.

The 2.4-ton Rontgensatellit (ROSAT), a German x-ray space telescope launched on June 1, 1990, has been spinning uselessly in space for 12 years after it was disabled in 1999 due to failure of its guidance system. Germany's scientific research agency, when ROSAT will re-enter Earth's atmosphere, it will shower nearly 30 debris items weighing a total of 1.6 tons. This will include pieces of telescope's mirror that is very heat resistant.

Though the exact time and location of re-entry cannot be predicted, scientists believe the defunct satellite may collide with Earth by the end of October or early November.

Joanne Wheeler, a member of the law firm CMS Cameron McKenna, which represents the UK on the UN Subcommittee for the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, stated, "ROSAT does not have a propulsion system on board which can be used to maneuver the satellite to allow a controlled re-entry.

â€œThe time and position of ROSAT's re-entry cannot be predicted with any precision due to fluctuations in solar activity, which affect atmospheric drag."

"Up to 30 pieces of metal and carbon fiber are expected to survive the blazing temperatures of re-entry to the Earth's atmosphere and strike land. Among them are the giant mirrors which were designed to be heat-resistant to protect the telescope's x-ray array." - Telegraph reporter Andy Bloxham.

Risk of injury or damage low:- The likelihood of ROSAT causing death, injury or property damage due to re-entry is remote as most that most of the Earth is covered with water.

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1.6 tons of falling debris:- When the spacecraft re-orbits at a speed of approximately 28,000 kilometres per hour, the X-ray observatory, consisting of several barrel shaped mirrors, will break up into fragments.

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