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Indian Space Policy: ISRO to focus on R&D

The Indian Space Research Organisation will transition out from manufacturing operational space.

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A view of Satish Dhawan Space Centre. File photo | Photo Credit: ANI

The new Indian Space Policy, which was made public on Thursday, April 20, 2023, has said the Indian Space Research Organisation shall transition out from manufacturing



The Indian Space Policy-2023, which was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security on April 6, also permits non-government entities (NGEs) to offer national and international space-based communication services, through self-owned, procured or leased geostationary orbit (GSO) and non-geostationary satellite orbit (NGSO) satellite systems.

NGSO is a reference to low earth orbit or medium earth orbits that are home to satellites providing broadband internet services from space.

The policy also encourages NGEs to establish and operate ground facilities for space objects operations, such as telemetry, tracking and command (TT&C) Earth Stations and Satellite Control Centres (SCCs).

It also allows NGEs to undertake end-to-end activities in the space sector through the establishment and operation of space objects, ground-based assets and related services such as communication, remote sensing and navigation.

It encouraged NGEs to use Indian orbital resources and/or non-Indian orbital resources to establish space objects for communication services over India and outside.

The policy encouraged NGEs to manufacture and operate space transportation systems, including launch vehicles, shuttles, as well as design and develop reusable, recoverable and reconfigurable technologies and systems for space transportation.

It also encouraged NGEs to engage in the commercial recovery of an asteroid resource or a space resource.

"Any NGE engaged in such a process shall be entitled to possess, own, transport, use, and sell any such asteroid resource or space resource obtained in accordance with applicable law, including the international obligations of India," it said.

Industry leaders welcome policy



"This policy provides the much needed clarity on all space activities especially regarding space communication and other Applications," Lt Gen A K Bhatt, Director General Indian Space Association, told PTI.

He said the policy will be a catalyst for development of a robust innovative and globally competitive space ecosystem in India.

The policy also states that Indian consumers of space technology or services -- such as communication, remote sensing, data services and launch services -- whether from the public or the private sector, shall be free to directly procure them from any source.

The government unveiled space sector reforms in 2020 by opening it up for private participation and the new space policy, published on the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) website on Thursday, has been formulated as an overarching, composite and dynamic framework to implement the reform vision.

The policy states that ISRO, as the national space agency, will focus primarily on the research and development of new space technologies and applications and on expanding the human understanding of outer space.

To achieve this goal, the policy said ISRO shall carry out applied research and development of newer systems so as to maintain India's edge in the sector in the areas of space infrastructure, space transportation, space applications, capacity building and human spaceflight.

It said the space agency shall transition out from the existing practice of being present in the manufacturing of operational space systems.

"Hereafter, mature systems shall be transferred to industries for commercial exploitation. ISRO shall focus on R&D in advanced technology, proving newer systems and realization of space objects for meeting national prerogatives," the policy stated.



mandate, guide and authorise space activities in the country.

The policy made it clear that NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), as the public sector undertaking under the Department of Space, shall be responsible for commercialising space technologies and platforms created through public expenditure.

It also mandated NSIL to manufacture, lease or procure space components, technologies, platforms and other assets from the private or the public sector on sound commercial principles.

The policy also tasked NSIL to service the space-based needs of users, whether government entities or non-government entities, on sound commercial principles.

It said the Department of Space shall oversee the distribution of responsibilities outlined in this policy and ensure that the different stakeholders are suitably empowered to discharge their respective functions without overlapping into the others' domains.

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