

ISRO's launch tally hits 5 main satellites this year

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MADHUMATHI D.S.
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Wednesday touched a tally of launching five main satellites so far in 2019 after sending up earth imaging satellite Cartosat-3.

Globally as launches go, China is set to top the chart of space-faring nations for the second year in a row, notes a recent report in the technology site Ars Technica.

India ranks fifth along with newbie New Zealand. They each have 6% of the orbital launch pie, according to website Space.Skyrocket.

It said the space majors totally made 87 orbital launches as on November 27. China

launched 28 satellites or 32% of them.

When the year ends, China's share will likely be still above Russia (20) and the U.S. (18), and the two old champions are unlikely to reach or overtake it in the remaining month, reckons Ars Technica.

By the end of 2019, India's launches may climb two numbers: that is if the radar imaging satellites RISAT-2BR1 and 2BR2 keep their December due dates.

The space agency counts a satellite and a launch vehicle as two missions.

Seven launches

By that yardstick, ISRO in 2018 made seven launches out of 16 missions and did

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ISRO CHAIRMAN



them more frequently than this year.

Soon after Wednesday's launch, ISRO Chairman K. Sivan announced, "We have 13 more missions to go over the next four months. They include 6 launches and 7 satellites."

He was referring to the target for the financial year ending in March 2020.

However, will the current fiscal year see fewer missions than the goal of 32 missions (with 14 launches) as Dr. Sivan stated in January?

The year has seen 11 missions - 5 launches and 6 satel-

lites (including GSat-31 satellite flown on a foreign launcher).

Eight of them came since April. Adding the upcoming 13, the current fiscal, as we now understand, may end with a total of 21 missions - 11 short of the January goal of 32. Can the space agency make up for it and do over 60% of them in four months?

'Not just numbers'

"You are evaluating ISRO as a production house and I don't agree on that," an ISRO spokesman said. "In the year that you are working on

(scientific missions like) a human space flight, 60% of the resources are attracted there. This year's Chandrayaan-2 alone equalled [the efforts of] five or six missions, given its complex elements such as an orbiter, a lander, a rover and a launch vehicle. Which is why such numbers are misleading."

He conceded that ISRO was "slightly behind its plan" for the financial year and would make up the shortfall in the next four-odd months. Delays in space missions, he said, are routine because each project must be 100% perfect.

"Adding numbers is a wrong way to gauge the output of a research organisation. For example, I can always repeat a routine remote sensing mission every month, but that is not the real objective of ISRO."

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