

SPACE CORNER

Isro plans to launch 21 rockets and 50 satellites within 4 years

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The Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) has lined up around 21 rocket launches, including the second test flight of its heaviest rocket, the Geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle (GSLV) MK-III, which will be carried out over a period of three-four years.

The outlay is part of the ₹8,658.74 crore sanctioned by the government for the Isro to build and launch 31 rockets, including 15 PSLVs, 13 GSLV's and three GSLV MK-III's. So far Isro has successfully built and launched 10 vehicles under the agreement. "Isro's launch vehicles are being used for launching national satellites towards meeting the earth observation, communication, navigation and scientific needs of the country. The excess capacity has been used to launch satellites of other countries," said Jitendra Singh, Minister of State at the Prime Minister's office early this week. The Space Commission, which runs Isro, is directly under the Prime Minister.

The plan to launch the next 21 rockets comes at a time when India is looking at putting over 70 satellites in space over the next five years. Isro has also said that 2017 will be the last year India will utilise foreign launch

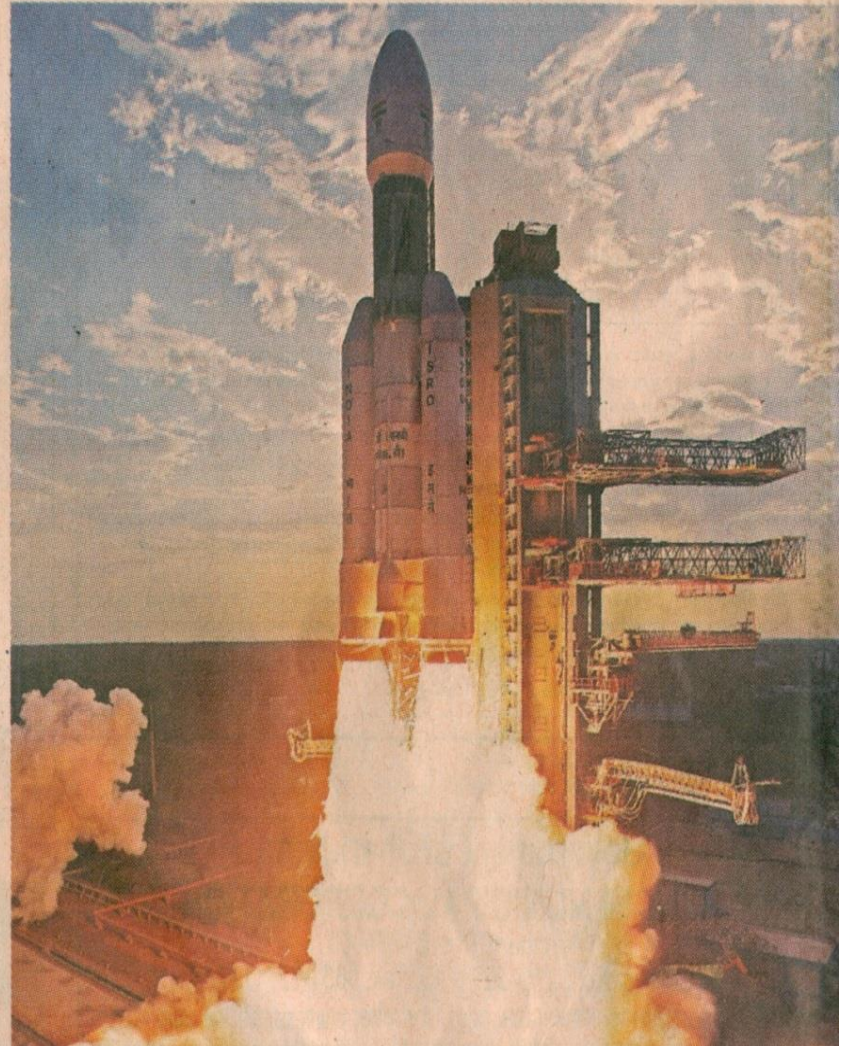
vehicles to hurl its satellites into space. India currently uses the Ariane 5 rocket, of Arianespace, the European Space Agency to launch its heavier communication satellites into space.

With GSLV-MkIII, the heavier rocket that can hurl four tonne communication satellites into space, it can have the capability locally.

Singh reiterated that Isro is making efforts to increase industry participation in building these launch vehicles as the need to step up its launch capabilities goes up, adding that no-help from any foreign country is being sought in augmenting its capacity.

Isro has already engaged in forming a consortium with industry partners by 2020 to build and launch the Pslv, its workhorse rocket. This would also allow it to focus on building capabilities in heavier rockets that is powered by a semi-cryogenic engine and the reusable launch vehicle that has potential to hurl cargo into space at low costs. At the same time, it has already begun outsourcing the manufacturing of its navigation satellite - Navic to a private consortium and looks to build capability in satellite in the industry. India is emerging as a hub for development of satellites as well as a launchpad for small satellites globally.

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Isro's heaviest rocket, GSLV MK-III