

Isro to launch rocket solely for foreign sats

New Delhi: Taking on rivals in the satellite launch market, Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) is gearing up for full-fledged commercial launches from September. A PSLV rocket will be launched in that month solely for foreign satellites.

Talking to TOI, Isro chairman K Sivan said here, "Of various missions lined up this year, the first launch will be of a PSLV rocket in September that will solely be for commercial purpose. Two UK satellites weighing 450 kg each will be the main payload. The UK will use these satellites for earth observation. There will not be any Indian satellite."

Sivan said, "Subsequent two PSLV missions will also carry foreign satellites. However those missions will be on sharing mode (it will also have a desi satellite)."

EYEING GLOBAL SAT MARKET



Till now, Isro has launched 237 foreign satellites of 28 countries

► Isro holds a miniscule 0.6% share in the global satellite launch market, which is estimated to be worth Rs 36,000 crore

► SpaceX, which had 5% share in commercial satellite launch market in 2013, continued to grow and gobbled up 45% share in 2017, according to a report

► US govt-owned NASA and Space X together captured over 65% of the market share in 2017

The full-fledged commercial mission is scheduled for launch after many years. On April 23, 2007, Isro had for the first time launched a rocket solely for commercial purpose. Its PSLV-CA carried Italy's astronomical satellite

AGILE as the main payload. Thereafter, on July 10, 2015, Isro achieved another milestone when it carried out the heaviest commercial mission as its PSLV-XL lifted off with five UK satellites together weighing 1,439 kg.

Chandrayaan-2 will not extract helium-3 from moon: Minister

Chandrayaan-2 mission will not extract helium-3 from the lunar surface, MoS Jitendra Singh said. Replying to a query, he said extracting helium-3 deposits was not on the cards. **Srinivas Laxman**

Antrix, Isro's commercial arm, is seen as a serious contender in the global satellite market due to low prices and high success rate of the PSLV. Of the 43 launches till now since 1993, PSLV was unsuccessful in only three missions with a success rate of 94%. Till now, Isro has launched 237 foreign satellites of 28 countries. Isro is, therefore, making all efforts to capture a big share of the satellite market. Currently, Isro holds just 0.6% share of the market, which is estimated to be worth Rs 36,000 crore.