

## ISRO readies for manned mission

Bangalore, April 4: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has finalised its project report for a manned mission by 2014-15, a top space official said here Friday.

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"The report is being submitted to the government for approval and budgetary allocation. The Space Commission, headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, will meet next week or so to review the report and take a decision. We plan to launch a manned mission in the next seven-eight years," ISRO chairman G. Madhavan Nair told reporters here.

The space agency's report has assessed technologies and infrastructure facilities required to undertake the first such and ambitious mission, which is estimated to cost about Rs.100 billion.

"The report also focuses on collaborating with participating agencies in the public and private sectors and creating dedicated teams for coordinating the mission," Nair said on the sidelines of a space event related to a telemedicine project.

On the Russian offer to train an Indian cosmonaut onboard its Soyuz spacecraft for the manned mission, Nair said the space agency would go into the nitty-gritty of the project after the government clears the project.

"Decision on whom to short-list, select and train will be taken up after the initial (ground) work. We are trying to see whether we can avail similar services of other space agencies too. Though Russian Federal Space Agency has come forward (as before) to train, we can respond only after the mission is cleared and we get going," Nair pointed out.

Way back in April 1984, India's first cosmonaut Rakesh Sharma went into space onboard Soyuz T-11 shuttle under the then Soviet Intercosmos programme.

Subsequently, Kalpana Chawla and Sunita Williams of Indian origin became the only two women astronauts to have gone into space onboard the US space shuttles - Columbia and Discovery. Kalpana, however, perished in the February 2003 mission disaster during return of her second space voyage.

On space programmes in the 11th Five Year Plan, Nair said the space agency would undertake about 70 missions for various space applications and explorations as against 25 such missions accomplished in the 10th Plan.

"The proposed missions will be a combination of satellite launches with transponders for enhancing communications, education, health, remote sensing, observatory and exploratory. In addition to lunar and manned missions, we will undertake projects for re-entry vehicles and recovery capsules," Nair noted.

The space budget for the 11th Plan is about Rs.40 billion, which is an increase of 25 percent over the previous plan allocation," Nair added.

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