

An insight into the Indian space programme



Moving one step closer to India's first Human Space Mission, the critical phase of preparations began for Gaganyaan with first Test Vehicle Flight TV-D1 successfully taking place on 21 October 2023 from the SDSC-SHAR Launchpad, Sriharikota (Photos: ISRO).

The habit of India and her people to dream above what seems to be impossible has always led the country to do majestic things; one such thing was the creation of the Indian Scientific Research and Development Organisation (ISRO) on 15 August 1969 to explore space. However, it is important to highlight that ISRO's formation was just a kind of official recognition of the Indian space programme by the Government of India. The roots of Indian space programmes can be traced back to the 1950s when DAE provided funds for space research across India, however, a significant leap to the Indian space programme came in 1962 when Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR) was set up under the supervision of Dr Vikram Sarabhai which eventually evolved into ISRO.

It is important to highlight that this was the period when India was itself struggling with numerous bigger challenges than just exploring space, however, it was Dr Vikram Ambalal Sarabhai whose constant efforts ensured that the Indian space programme was not diluted because of the other problems faced by the country. Vikram Sarabhai came from one of the richest families in India and had a Cambridge degree which allowed him to live a luxurious life outside India even at a time when Indians were rarely given any opportunity abroad.

But he decided to stay in the country and fight against all odds just to take India to space. His dedication could be understood by the fact that he used to charge a salary of only Re 1 from ISRO looking at his financial condition. However, it took a long for the people and government of India to understand the importance of space programmes. This could be understood by the fact that just after the launch of India's first rocket from Thumba in Kerala on 21 November 1963, a headline of a newspaper became very popular saying "India needs rice, not rockets".



The Father of Indian Space programme: Dr. Vikram Ambalal Sarabhai.

Evolution of ISRO

Forming the base: 1950-1960s

The ISRO in its initial days neither had adequate infrastructure nor adequate funds, all it had people like Vikram Sarabhai, APJ Abdul Kalam and Satish Dhawan