

Vote for manned space mission

Staff Reporter

BANGALORE: It was a shot in the arm for the country's ambitious manned space mission. About 80 top scientists and technologists on Tuesday unanimously voted for the programme, which could eventually propel India into a select group of nations.

At a National Consultative Meeting, hosted by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) headquarters here, B.N. Suresh, Director, Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), presented a study on the technological challenges of a manned space mission and the capability to undertake such a mission.

Madan Lal, Deputy Director, VSSC, made a detailed presentation.

The country's first manned space mission is scheduled for 2014 and the first lunar mission in 2020.

The concept for the manned space mission includes the development of an autonomous orbital vehicle, which could be launched by India's Geo-synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle, GSLV-Mk II, or GSLV-Mk III.

According to the study, ISRO had the technologies for the mission. However, developments were required in life support systems, improved reliability and safety and crew escape system.

While some of the facilities were available and could be used with augmentation, a few had to be established afresh.

The preliminary estimated cost of the manned space mission is Rs. 10,000 crore, spread over a period of eight years.

The scientists were highly appreciative of the study and unanimous in suggesting that the time was appropriate for India to undertake the mission.

Lengthy discussions

They held lengthy discussions on the technical aspects. They stressed on reliability and safety aspects of the mission.

Some key questions centred on the safety of the personnel making the flight. ISRO is expected to submit a report on the deliberations to the Government by the year-end.

The meeting was a result of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's suggestion to ISRO Chairman G. Madhavan Nair that a national team of scientists look into the whole issue.

Among those who attended the meeting were U.R. Rao, Yash Pal, Roddam Narasimha, R.M. Vasagam, N. Pant, P.S. Goel, Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma, N. Balakrishnan, A.R. Upadhya, T.S. Prahlad, S. Vasantha, G.N.V. Rao, V. Radhakrishnan, A.K. Saxena, K.V.S. Prasad, Avinash Chander, AVM D.C. Kumaria, Lt. Gen. Vijan and Pankaj Tyagi, besides Dr. Nair, directors and senior scientists of ISRO centres.