

India joins Europe's satellite data sharing pool

A file photo of a Vega rocket blasting off in Kourou, carrying the Sentinel-2A satellite for the Copernicus programme.AFP

India has joined Europe's mega global arrangement of sharing data from earth observation satellites, called Copernicus.

Data from a band of Indian remote sensing satellites will be available to the European Copernicus programme, while designated Indian institutional users will in return get to access free data from Europe's six Sentinel satellites and those of other space agencies that are part of the programme, at their cost.

The space-based information will be used for forecasting disasters, providing emergency response and rescue of people during disasters; to glean land, ocean data; and for issues of security, agriculture, climate change and atmosphere, according to a statement issued by the European Commission here.

The agreement was signed in Bengaluru on Monday by Philippe Brunet, Director for Space Policy, Copernicus and Defence, on behalf of the EC and by P.G. Diwakar, Scientific Secretary, Indian Space Research Organisation.

The multi-billion-euro Copernicus is Europe's system for monitoring the earth using satellite data. It is coordinated and managed by the EC.

Range of applications

The free and open data policy is said to have a wide range of applications that can attract users in Europe and outside. The Copernicus emergency response mapping system was activated on at least two Indian occasions — during the 2014 floods in Andhra Pradesh in October 2014 and after the 2013 storm in Odisha.

“Under this arrangement, the European Commission intends to provide India with free, full and open access to the data from the Copernicus Sentinel family of satellites using high bandwidth connections. Reciprocally the Department of Space will provide the Copernicus programme and its participating states with a free, full and open access to the data from ISRO's land, ocean and atmospheric series of civilian satellites (Oceansat-2, Megha-Tropiques, Scatsat-1, SARAL, INSAT-3D, INSAT-3DR) with the exception of commercial high-resolution satellites data,” the EC said.

The arrangement includes technical assistance for setting up high bandwidth connections with ISRO sites, mirror servers, data storage and archival facilities.

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