

ALL LOW EARTH SATELLITES IN REACH OF ASAT MISSILE: DRDO CHIEF

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The anti-satellite (ASAT) test, Mission Shakti, conducted last week is a “deterrence capability” and the missile can cover all satellites in Low Earth Orbit (LEO), Dr. Satheesh Reddy, Chairman of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), said on Saturday.

“The test happened as per design. We don’t need any more tests in this orbit as of now. The guidance and control algorithm has been developed to do interception at 1,000 km above the earth. This test covers all LEO satellites, including those for military use,” Dr. Reddy said, adding that hitting multiple satellites was feasible. He was addressing a press conference on the ASAT test.

On March 27, a live satellite in LEO of 300 km was shot down using a modified interceptor of the Ballistic Missile Defence system.

On the issue of militarisation of space, Dr. Reddy said space had gained importance in the military domain. “When a country like India has done an exercise like this and shown capability of interception of a target, you have shown the capability for such operations. Best way of defence is to have deterrence.”

Giving details of Mission Shakti, Dr. Reddy, the chief architect of the ASAT test, said the first discussion on the test started in 2014 and the “formal detailed presentation was made in 2016 and post that we took two years to develop the system.”

On the timing of the test, Deputy National Security Adviser Pankaj Saran said it was a “technologically and scientifically driven one.”

'NASA ties continue'

On concerns raised by the U.S. space agency, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Mr. Saran said, “NASA is continuing its cooperation with India, including in the manned mission to space. We have had several statements from the U.S., as far as India is concerned the official position is contained in the State Department statement.”

To questions on the debris created by the test, Dr. Reddy said extensive simulations were conducted and there was no threat to the International Space Station (ISS). “LEO was chosen based on simulations with primary objective being to minimise debris. It was intentionally done at 280 km altitude so that debris decay fast,” Dr. Reddy said, adding that the interception was designed to hit at an angle so that minimal debris go up and also have minimal velocity. “Some of the debris have already decayed. Our simulations show all debris will decay in 45 days,” he added.

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