

# ISRO CRANKS UP GAGANYAAN PROJECT

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The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Friday said work on 'Gaganyaan', the project to send a manned mission to space by 2022, would start soon at the newly created Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC).

"Gaganyaan is our highest priority now," K. Sivan, ISRO Chairman and Secretary, Department of Space, told reporters here. "We have put in a management structure to realise it. The Human Space Flight Centre [based in Bengaluru] will carry out all activities related to the human programme. Under it will function the Gaganyaan Project," he added.

Dr. Sivan also announced the appointment of Unnikrishnan Nair — who led ISRO's Advanced Space Transportation Programme at the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) and has already worked in the area as the director of the Human Space Flight Project — as the director of the new centre.

The facility would be staffed by a dedicated team, with ISRO planning to deploy 800 to 900 people over time on the project.

ISRO's announcement of the new centre and the naming of its head comes about five months after the government first unveiled plans to send a manned mission to space.

R. Hutton, who helmed the PSLV light lift vehicle programme at the VSSC in Thiruvananthapuram, will be the project director in Dr. Nair's team and his deputy.

"All work related to the mission will formally begin now," Dr. Sivan said. This would include the schedule, blueprints for various tasks, astronaut selection with the Indian Air Force and systems based on the project report.

The ISRO chairman told *The Hindu* that the nodal Human Space Programme Office set up six months back under V.R. Lalithambika would continue to coordinate mission affairs at the space agency's headquarters.

While ISRO has projected a manpower requirement of 861 personnel for the project, including 761 to be appointed in addition to the routine annual hiring. It expects to recruit the team in stages.

ISRO's Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram, which produces about 100 space engineers each year, would be a primary source of talent, said a senior official.

## 'Big bang'

"The year 2019 has started with a big bang with Gaganyaan getting the government's approval and budget for putting three astronauts in space for seven days," Dr. Sivan said. The astronauts will orbit Earth at a distance of 400 km.

"The HSPC will work full steam now," Dr. Sivan said. "We must select the astronauts, train them, create and ensure livable conditions in space for them, bring them back safely and later rehabilitate them in their routines."

The heavy lift launch vehicle GSLV Mark III, which got operational in November after its second successive flight in a row, must be suitably certified or human-rated. It will have two non-crew flights in December 2020 and July 2021.

The actual flight with crew is targeted to happen by December 2021 — to meet the Prime Minister's goal of August 2022, India's 75th Independence anniversary.

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