

ALL INDIA PEOPLE'S SCIENCE NETWORK (AIPSN)

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AIPSN solidarity with ISRO employees Save ISRO

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Over the past few decades, ISRO has established India as a leader in space science and technology. Its scientists, technologists, and staff have worked tirelessly to achieve national objectives—from placing Indian and foreign satellites into orbit and executing the Mars and Chandrayaan missions to now working towards establishing an Indian space station. These achievements, which were unthinkable a few decades ago, have earned respect both internationally and among ordinary citizens.

Recent announcements by the government and the Chairman of IN-SPACe—the agency established to oversee and promote the commercialisation of the space sector—have sparked intense public debate. Nine employee organisations, representing thousands of workers at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), jointly sent a formal letter to ISRO Chairman V. Narayanan. The associations formally questioned recent statements suggesting that ISRO would eventually phase out launch vehicle manufacturing and transition into a "residual R&D boutique". This policy shift has amplified the concerns of scientists, engineers, retired ISRO personnel, advocacy organisations, and citizens regarding the direction in which ISRO is being steered.

Unwarranted political intervention and policy changes have already caused significant strain, with 100 scientists leaving ISRO within a three-month period. These reactions are not mere knee-jerk opposition to privatisation or the involvement of private players in space and strategic sectors. Rather, these concerns centre on India's standing in the global space ecosystem and the self-reliant advancement of national interests in an increasingly tech-driven future. Nor do these anxieties stem from misconstrued "narratives"—as the IN-SPACe Chairman suggests—but from the structural framework of the Indian Space Policy 2023 and its official implementation.

Since independence, the nation has reached a consensus that the scientific community should receive full academic freedom and financial support to serve the country. Where structural impediments have restricted research and technological development, the government's responsibility is to address those gaps. However, since 2014, political intervention has increased alongside a shift towards handing over public sector assets to private interests. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) have, in effect, led to the syphoning of public assets for private gain. It is deeply alarming that this approach is now being directed at ISRO.

For decades, ISRO has served the nation with distinction. It is now our duty as citizens of India to defend this vital institution, resist these damaging shifts, and stand in firm support of our scientific community.

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A Network of 40 People's Science Movements working in 25 states
