

AIR Spotlight - India's Strides in Space

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in the [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, the discussion is on India's strides in space.

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the formation of the Indian Space Association – (ISpA).

Role of Indian Space Association

- ISpA is intended as the Premier Industry Association of Space and Satellite companies and aspires to be the collective voice of the Indian space industry.
- It will undertake policy advocacy and engage with all stakeholders in the Indian space domain, including the Government and its agencies.
- ISpA will help in making India self-reliant, technologically advanced, and a leading player in the space arena.
- It is not a regulatory body that will set policy but a body of the industry that will work alongside the government and make sure that space technologies reach the 1.35 billion Indian population.
- ISpA is represented by leading domestic and global corporations with advanced capabilities in space and satellite technologies. Its founding members include Larson & Toubro, Nelco (Tata Group), OneWeb, Bharti Airtel, etc.

Read more on the [Indian Space Association \(ISpA\)](#) in the linked article.

Significance

- It unlocks the private sector's role in the space industry not only as vendors but as full-fledged players in the entire value chain. For example, 70% of the budget of the [Indian Space Research Organization](#) (ISRO) is spent on the Indian industry for sending components, making parts, etc. but now with this whole new approach, the industry could make full-fledged rockets and could have full-fledged satellites.
- It is in line with the Government's approach to space reforms based on 4 pillars.
 - Freedom of innovation to the private sector.
 - Role of the government as an enabler.
 - Preparing youth for the future.
 - To see the space sector as a resource for the progress of the common man.
- Additionally, it enables the rapid adoption of digital technologies in remote and other areas for various purposes like education, farming, fishermen, cell phone connectivity, national security, geo-tagging of the development projects, and weather forecasting.
- It helps to monetize space technology and domestic development of intellectual property to aid innovation. For example, OneWeb is building a constellation of 648 LEO satellites and has already

put 322 satellites into orbit. Besides India, services will begin for the Arctic region including Alaska, Canada, and the UK.

- It enhances the scope for the startup industry in space technology, brings down the price of space technology due to competition, etc.
- It helps to diversify the space industry and better manage the burden on ISRO and the Department of Space.

Way forward

- India still has a very small share of the global space market. It also has to leapfrog and compete with established players like the United States of America, Europe, and Russia.
- There is a lot more that needs to be done and the industry needs to bootstrap and strive towards new and innovative research and development.
- Access and affordability have to be ensured to address the digital divide in the country.
- The new space policy should be opened for public discussion and create space for domestic entrepreneurship in the space sector.

Conclusion

- 20th-century space technology was more like a divider among the haves and have nots. India's approach looks at space as a unifier and helps to democratize the sector for the 21st century.