

28th SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE POLICY, REGULATIONS AND ECONOMICS (E3)

The space economy: what are the socio-economic impacts? (3)

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PRIVATISING SPACE MISSIONS – THE CRITICAL ROUTE TO BOOST INDIAN SPACE ECONOMY

Abstract

Space based services in India have reached a stage where demand is out-pacing supply and is creating a unique opportunity for developing space industry. A major outcome of advances in space, information and communications technologies, coupled with changes in policy environment in India, immensely favours deregulation of space activities in a strategic manner into a public-private domain; thrusting private sector investments and space assets ownership and operations; space services to burgeoning domestic demand and impacting global businesses; creating high technology manufacturing capability and competitive alliances and cooperation.

Prospects for growth of commercial space activities in India are promising given that there is still high potential for growth in demands for satellite capacity and for new services such as GIS based decision support systems, mobile multimedia, positioning and navigation applications, disaster management support, rural connectivity and national security related applications. Demand for Satellite communications is very high – with large downstream services business; constant need for repetitive and Highres images from space and other platforms – with downstream services potential for National GIS; expanding from a regional to a global positioning system and services and applications; large-scale supply of operational LEO/GEO launch systems capability based on operational PSLV; catering to global markets of space manufacturing/applications by offering high-quality but cost-effective Indianised solutions etc are classic cases that can be easily privatised and migrated from present “ISRO regime” to a combinative “ISRO+private sector” capacity for future Indian space success – founding the possibility of Indian private-sector space assets ownership and operations.

The paper creates a case and scenario for a time-bound strategy of “license-buyback” model of thrust for private-sector manufacturing, ownership and operations of Indian space assets – especially communication satellites, EO satellites, PSLV-type launch vehicle etc for space services to meet Indian requirements. This approach will also bring in private sector investment in Indian space – releasing financial resources for critical advanced technology development in the public regime of ISRO.

The paper analyses “sample cases” from an investment scenario assessment, policy dimensions and risk-environmental that would be of interest for private-sector development for Indian space.