

Government depts seek more space, dial ISRO to innovate

chief said in an interview on the sidelines of a function organised by CNN-IBN news TV channel.

Accordingly, the Department of Space has organised a conference in New Delhi next month to which it has invited all government departments. "It will be like the 'Make In India' conference... We have asked all departments to give us their requirements and we can then assess whether some customised solutions can be developed using space technology," Kiran Kumar said.

India's space programme has, besides doing its primary job of space exploration, focused heavily on developing applications that can aid the development process. ISRO is already working with more than 20 departments on programmes such as tele-education, flood forecasting, early warning systems, disaster management, and water management.

The change from the past, Kiran Kumar said, has been in the attitude of the departments. "Earlier, we used to go to other departments, demonstrating the

possible uses of our various technologies. What has changed in the last few months is that they have started coming to us. This is a much better situation, because the departments are already interested when they come to us," he said.

Kiran Kumar's predecessor at ISRO, K Radhakrishnan, who too spoke with The Sunday Express, said that one of the Indian space programme's greatest strengths has been its ability to develop a variety of applications. "It is also what distinguishes India's space programmes from those of the other leading space-faring nations, and makes us special," Radhakrishnan said.

Kiran Kumar conceded that if a large number of departments put forward demands for applications, the resources of ISRO would be put under stress.

"If that kind of situation arises, we would definitely have to look at expanding our infrastructure and manpower resources. But we don't expect that to happen in the immediate future. In the short term, we will make

do with our existing resources. We plan to create applications for departments and then step back, and allow the departments to take full control of them. That is what we are doing currently. We have created applications in collaboration with the Central Water Commission or the National Institute of Ocean Technology, for example, and it is those people who are in total control now," he said.

"We have to make sure that whatever requirements the country has in terms of space technology, that capacity is established and provided — in terms of remote sensing, communication or navigation... We have to make sure we continue to provide solutions to problems," Kiran Kumar said.

Some state governments too have approached ISRO, he said. "We are looking at their requirements. As of now, we are preparing ourselves to meet the increasing demand for ISRO services. We are very happy to be playing an increasingly active role in the country's development," Kiran Kumar said.