

Govt plans to allow FDI in space sector to boost investment: Minister

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NEW DELHI: Space minister Jitendra Singh on Wednesday informed Parliament that the government has planned to allow FDI in the space sector to boost investment by foreign players. He said that around 75 startups have registered under the space technology category in the Startup India portal and that there are many more startups registered under other categories that are also involved in the space domain. In a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha, the minister said that to facilitate private sector participation in space activities, the department of space is revising existing policies in space domain and a new policy framework is being drafted to address various space sector categories such as SpaceCom, remote sensing, technology transfer, navigation, space transportation, space exploration and space situational awareness.

Provisions are also being factored in the policy framework for the development of the private sector, including MSMEs and startups, in the space sector. In order to address the necessary legal framework, the department is also in the process of enacting a national legislation. The draft Space Activities Bill has completed public and legal consultations and will be processed for further approvals for inter-ministerial consultations.

On the issue of Isro's plan to develop an Indian space telescope, Singh informed that the space agency has already realised X-ray and visible/ultraviolet telescopes. In the coming years, Isro has plans to develop space telescopes dedicated to UV and visible/IR astronomy. The planned UV telescope will be made up of a 1-metre mirror and will provide deepest images in UV.

The minister said initiatives have also been taken for the exploration of space weather, Sun, Moon and other planets as well as astronomical sources. He said a decadal plan is under preparation covering scientific and technological development for future space missions.

Singh also informed the LS that technology development projects are going on in Isro centres spanning the areas of scientific instrumentation, communication, navigation, remote sensing etc. Moreover, disruptive technologies based on quantum mechanical principle that includes satellite-based quantum communication, quantum radar have been initiated.

Under the Atal Incubation Centre (AIC) scheme, the Atal Innovation Mission has supported more than 15 startups working in space technology and related industries across India. The focus areas for these startups are in UAV, drone and surveillance equipment, aero tech, air taxi, space debris tracking and monitoring service and space education.