

## India Can Go To Mars, Says PRL Director J. N. Goswami

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*AsianScientist (Feb. 15, 2012)* - Former ISRO chairman, U. R. Rao, on Tuesday regretted that India has not made progress in the field of rocket development, and has been overtaken by China.

Rao, who is still associated with ISRO as chairman of the PRL (Physical Research Laboratory) council, an affiliate of ISRO, recalled to *Asian Scientist Magazine* that in the 90's India had made significant strides in the area of space sciences and applications, especially in satellite technology, and was ahead of many nations.

"Now the scene is such that we have not made much progress in rocket development. China has designed and developed rockets having the capability to ferry nine ton payloads to orbit. But, we are stuck with 2.5 tons," he said.

He was all praise for the Chinese space program, saying that it was planning a lunar landing mission in 2017, and possibly even a human mission to Mars in 2030. "China has launched manned missions to space," he told the large gathering of space scientists.

Rao said that for India's space program to really make progress, there should be a stronger link between the space sector and industries.

The four-day space meet, which is being held at the Sri Venkateshwara University at the foothills of the Sathagiri Hills is a joint endeavor of the university and ISRO. During the meet, there were a number of technical presentations about Mars by top Indian space scientists who are involved in India's mission to Mars.

Director of the Ahmedabad-based PRL, J. N. Goswami, told this magazine that the "lack of qualified scientists is haunting us."

"We have not been successful in getting young qualified scientists interested in space-based experiments and astronomy," he told *Asian Scientist Magazine*.

And at the same time, just when the Obama administration has announced its controversial and unpopular decision to slash funds for future NASA Mars missions, Goswami said:

“India can go to Mars. Our planetary scientists hope that ISRO will soon provide an opportunity to go to Mars,” he said.

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