

ISRO CHIEF SOMNATH SAYS SPACE AGENCY PREFERS WOMAN FIGHTER TEST PILOTS FOR ITS CREWED MISSION, POSSIBLE IN FUTURE

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ISRO prefers woman fighter test pilots or female scientists for its Gaganyaan mission, the space agency chief S. Somanath said. File | Photo Credit: K. Murali Kumar

ISRO prefers woman fighter test pilots or female scientists for its much-awaited human space flight [programme Gaganyaan](#) mission and it is possible to send them in the future, the space agency chief S. Somanath said on Sunday.

He also said ISRO would send a female humanoid - a robot that resembles a human - in its unmanned Gaganyaan spacecraft next year. The ambitious mission aims to send humans into space on a Low Earth Orbit of 400 km for three days and bring them safely back to the Earth.

"No doubt about it...but we have to find out such possible (women) candidates in the future," Somanath told *PTI* over phone in response to a query.

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His statement came a day after the ISRO successfully launched its TV-D1 test vehicle ahead of the human space flight mission Gaganyaan.

He said the manned mission is expected by 2025 and that it will be a short duration mission.

"Right now, the initial candidates are to be from Air Force fighter test pilots...they are a bit different category. Right now, we are not having women fighter test pilots. So, once they come, that is one route," the Chairman said.

The second option was when there would be more scientific activity, he said.

"Then, scientists will come as astronauts. So, at that time, I believe that more possibilities for women are there. Currently, possibilities are lesser because there are no women fighter test pilots," Mr. Somanath explained.

To a question, he said the ISRO's target is to put a fully operational space station by 2035.

ISRO had successfully launched TV-D1 test vehicle ahead of the human space flight mission Gaganyaan on Saturday.

After overcoming initial hiccups including delays, the space agency successfully launched the test vehicle with payloads related to the country's ambitious Gaganyaan programme.

Scientists simulated an abort situation for the Crew Escape System to carry the Crew Module of the test vehicle out as they made a splash into the Bay of Bengal with planned precision.

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