

MM Activ celebrates the Golden Jubilee of India's first Rocket Launch

Nov 21, 2013: Though Homi Bhabha and Dr. Vikram Sarabhai passed away early, they laid the foundation of Indian space research and the grandeur of their vision has manifested into reality. With this as the central line of thought, the **50th anniversary of the first rocket launch in India** was celebrated in Pune on 21st November, 2013. Eminent scientists **Prof. Dr. E. V. Chitnis** and **Pramod Kale**, who were members of the team that launched the first rocket for India, spoke on this occasion. MM Activ Sci-Tech Communications has organized this programme.



Prof. Dr. Chitnis, a Padmabhushan awardee and former Director of the Space Application Centre of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), relived the memories of the 50 years old operation that started in July, 1962 and was completed on November 21, 1963 – a period of 16 months. The complete execution took place in Thumba in Kerala, which now houses the Thumba Equatorial Rocket Launching Station (TERLS). In an interesting anecdote, Prof. Dr. Chitnis mentioned how Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam came into ISRO. “In January of 1962, Sarabhai, H.G.S. Murthy and I were discussing in Cambridge about whom to hire for the programme. Sarabhai shared some details about Kalam. I saw them and said - let's take him,” he said.

Kale, who is the director of Integrated Circuit and Information Technology Pvt. Ltd. currently, was part of the team that went to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the United States of America (USA) for training before the programme. “Four rockets were delivered to us by America. We did not have rocket storage and rocket assembly facilities constructed at Thumba then. We kept the rockets with the India Air Force for some time,” Kale recalled. Indian scientists, with the guidance of Sarabhai, went on to construct indigenous equipments for the launch. On November 21, 1963, the rocket was launched at approximately 6:47 PM.



Vijay Thombre, Director, MM Activ Sci-Tech Communications said that this day is very important in the history of India's scientific development. “On the backdrop of the Magalyaan, this gains even more importance. The future belongs to science and MM Activ Sci-Tech Communications aims to create a communication platform for activities and people associated with Indian science and technology,” said Thombre.

Underlining the importance of the first launch, **N. Suresh** said that the entire propulsion technology evolved in India after this initiative. Suresh, who was the science correspondent for The Times of India in the 80s and the 90s, is the Group Editor at MM Activ Sci-Tech Communications now.

Dr. M.C. Uttam, Head of the Pune Centre of ISRO and a junior of Dr. Chitnis and Kale, said that he always received encouragement from his seniors even after failure. Yeshwant Waghmare, vice-president of the Maharashtra Education Society, said that Sarabhai and Bhabha provided young scientists the environment to work freely and gave such momentum that a legacy of development was borne. Summing up, Dr. Chitnis said that ISRO has set up an example of great management. "Passion has been the real driving force for scientists. ISRO is our gift to the nation," he said
