Lessons from ISRO

Why in news?

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ISRO recently launched 104 satellites from a single rocket.

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What is ISRO?

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- The **Indian Space Research Organisation** (**ISRO)** is the space agency of the Government of India headquartered in the city of Bengaluru.
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- It was formed in 1969 and superseded the erstwhile Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR) established in 1962.
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- It is managed by the Department of Space, which reports to the Prime Minister.
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- The prime minister also usually always head of Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, NITI Aayog, Department of Atomic Energy, & Nuclear Command Authority
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What makes ISRO stand out?

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ISRO stands for excellence when a majority of government institutions suffer from challenges in terms of capacity and execution. It is because,

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- **Autonomy -** ISRO reports directs to the PM’s office rather than a line ministry.
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- Line ministries and its bureaucrats have a tendency to micromanage everything. But the PMO works differently since its officials don't have the time to supervise the affairs of every institution under its ambit.
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- ISRO, therefore, has a real autonomy than other govt agencies.
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- **Location -** Most govt departments being located in Delhi are vulnerable to the authority of the parent ministry and the concerned bureaucracy.
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- ISRO, headquartered in Bengaluru, is distant from Delhi and immune from the its drawbacks. It has the right ecosystem to attract talent and build its knowledge capabilities.
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- **Human Capital -** Unlike other govt agencies which are staffed by generalists, ISRO is staffed by specialists**.**
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- **Private Sector -** ISRO is also more liberal in cooperating with and working with the best in the private sector. The building blocks of many of ISRO's successes come from outside the govt system.
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What government must do?

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- Govt must build top quality institutions in a limited number of areas where the govt's role cannot be substituted by the private sector.
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- Cutting-edge R&D in spheres where there isn't a ready profit is the one area where the govt should focus if it were to build an institution like ISRO.
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- Defence could be one such area. A **completely reformed DRDO** headquartered at Pune or Bengaluru (not Delhi) which reports to the PMO, which actively collaborates with the private sector is worth considering.
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- Also, **a central vaccine agency,** based in some other Indian city, which focusses on solutions to under-researched diseases is another area.
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- In all these agencies, independence from line ministries is very important

if it were to perform to its fullest.
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Source: The Hindu

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