

Keynoter Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan Makes the Case for Assessing Risk from Space

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Space offers multitudes of opportunities to anticipate, manage and assess risk, astrophysicist Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan, Ph.D., said as a keynote speaker at the 2007 Decision and Risk Analysis Conference at The University of Texas at Dallas.

Dr. Kasturirangan, who holds a doctorate in experimental high energy astronomy, presented his views to those attending the conference on May 21 and 22, at the UT Dallas School of Management. As the former head of the Indian Space Research Organization, he offered examples of how through detection, early warning, monitoring and intervention information gathered from different satellites helped minimize risks that India's populations faced from cataclysmic natural events.

People in poorer districts are the ones maximally affected by these disasters, Dr. Kasturirangan noted. The impact of natural disasters can be profound, he said, not only damaging a nation's gross domestic product but ultimately its socioeconomic growth.

And trend lines indicate not only are losses through natural disasters growing worldwide, but that the greatest economic devastation happens in developing countries those nations that can least afford it, he added.

In India, floods, earthquakes, droughts and cyclones cause the most severe damage. In addition, officials monitor other natural disasters pests and disease, forest fires, epidemics and hailstorms. In each of these cases, Dr. Kasturirangan said, using space and satellite technology can help victims predict, mitigate and/or recover from the disaster at hand.

Even in a discipline seemingly unrelated to satellites food security and risk management Dr. Kasturirangan said space technology can be critical to predict crop size, impacts of either droughts or floods, and decipher early warnings that crop conditions are imperiled. Armed with such information, industry and national leaders can make decisions about storage, transportation and delivery of grains, and for a nation such as India, which in some years must import food whether additional stores must be secured.

The conference, held by The Naveen Jindal School of Management