

5.8-TONNE GSAT-11 READY FOR LAUNCH

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A team of top officials and engineers of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), now stationed in the Guiana Space Centre, South America, is going over the last steps before it sees off the heaviest Indian communication satellite, GSAT-11, to its space orbit. The liftoff is slated for the wee hours of Wednesday, December 5, India time, but from half way across the globe.

The 5,854-kg satellite, almost double the biggest one built or launched by ISRO to date, will ride up on European launch vehicle Ariane 5 ECA, numbered VA246, between 2.07 a.m. and 3.23 a.m. IST, according to the schedule of Arianespace, which is providing the launch services. It will be sunset at nearby Kourou in French Guiana, located 5 degrees North of the Equator, with a launch window between 5.37 p.m. and 6.53 p.m. local time.

ISRO Chairman K. Sivan, besides the project director and scores of engineers, who have been taking care of the satellite for the last 30-odd days, are in Kourou for the big day, it is learnt.

GSAT-11 is part of ISRO's new family of high-throughput communication satellite (HTS) fleet that will drive the country's Internet broadband from space to untouched areas; the broadband domain is now ruled by underground fibre and covers partial and convenient locations.

High-speed data

Already up in space are two HTSs — GSAT-29 (November 14) and GSAT-19 (June 2017) — while one more is due to join them in the near future. They are all to provide high-speed Internet data services at the rate of 100 Gbps (Gigabits per second) to Indian users. ISRO has earlier said this speed would be far better than what is available in the country now.

The HTSs will also be the backbone of pan-India digital or easy Internet-based programmes and services — such as Digital India, BharathNet for rural e-governance, and commercial and public sector VSAT Net service providers.

According to ISRO, GSAT-11's multiple spot beam coverage — 32 in Ku band and eight in Ka bands — will deliver an improved service of 16 gbps over the Indian region and nearby islands. It said, "GSAT-11 will play a vital role in providing broadband services across the country. It will also provide a platform to demonstrate new generation applications."

New date

GSAT-11 was earlier planned for launch on May 26 this year. A few days before it, ISRO brought it back from Kourou to the Bengaluru satellite centre for additional checks. The spacecraft was sent back in October for the rescheduled launch.

Its co-passenger is South Korea's GEO-KOMPSAT-2A, a meteorology satellite.

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