

## GSAT-6A gives India bigger eye in the sky

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully placed a communication satellite GSAT-6A in a geosynchronous transfer orbit. It was carried on board the GSLV F-08 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre here on Thursday.

The GSAT-6A is a communication satellite that incorporates the high-thrust Vikas engine. It will complement the GSAT-6, which is already in orbit. The GSAT-6A's antenna has a diameter of six metres — it can be unfurled and opened like an umbrella once it reaches its prescribed orbit.

The ISRO team at Mission Control appeared pensive waiting for the indigenous cryogenic upper stage to fire and take the satellite into its initial orbit. Former Chairmen of ISRO, K. Radhakrishnan and A.S. Kiran Kumar, too, watched the proceedings from Mission Control.

“These two satellites combined will provide platforms for development of advanced technologies such as the unfurlable antenna, hand-held devices, and ground networks,” K. Sivan, Chairman, ISRO, said after the satellite was placed in an initial orbit of a perigee of 170 km and apogee of 35,975 km, 18 minutes after the rocket blasted off at 4.56 p.m.

The satellite will be placed at a height of 36,000 km in a geostationary orbit, and the antenna will be unfurled in the coming days.

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