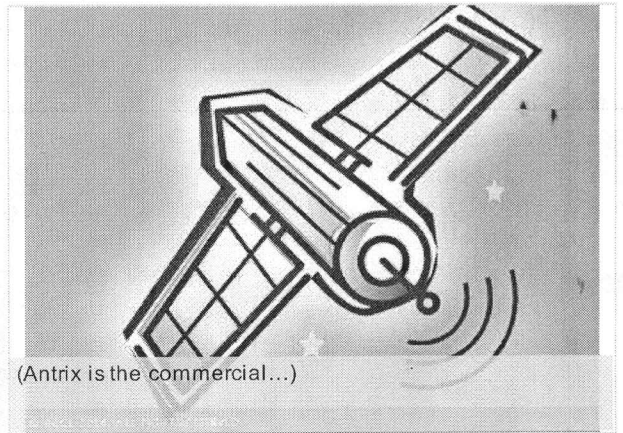


# DoS asks Antrix to arrange satellite capacity for BSNL from ThaiComm, MEASAT

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**Tags:** ThaiComm | Satellite | Planning commission | MEASAT | Lakshadweep |  
Insat Coordination Committee | Department of Space | BSNL | Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd |  
Antrix Corp.

**KOLKATA:** The Department of Space (DoS) has urged Antrix Corp. to quickly seek out additional transponder capacity for Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd from global satellite operators such as ThaiComm and MEASAT in order to ensure better communications services in the strategically located Andaman and Nicobar islands and the Lakshadweep islands.



BSNL has been finding it difficult to provide telecom coverage in these areas after losing a significant 322 MHz of bandwidth capacity when the INSAT-3E satellite stopped functioning.

"Antrix can negotiate annual lease charges for securing additional transponder capacity for BSNL from international satellite operators like MEASAT and ThaiComm," DoS noted in documents reviewed by ET.

The department has suggested that capacity be sought on ThaiComm-7 from this month itself "since annual leases charges at Rs 6.6 crore per transponder is cheaper than Rs 7.5 crore per transponder per year for capacity on the MEASAT system," according to the documents.

Antrix is the commercial and marketing arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro), which comes under the ambit of DoS.

The department has also indicated that fresh "transponder capacity can be made available to BSNL on the GSAT-16 satellite," although such allocations can be considered only next year after the satellite becomes operational in the last quarter of 2014-15.

GSAT-16 will be India's 11th communications satellite and will increase the number of transponders, boosting satellite-based telecom and television services in the country.

The latest developments come as BSNL has sought a waiver on satellite bandwidth charges to sustain telecom coverage in the Andamans and Lakshadweep besides the remote border districts of the Northeast and Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir.

BSNL currently spends Rs 122 crore on providing satellite services in the Andamans alone, of which nearly Rs 65 crore accounts for transponder charges. This is largely because satellite transponder charges have increased 60% since April 2012.

While the Planning Commission recently recommended waiver of satellite bandwidth charges for BSNL, a final decision will be taken by the INSAT Coordination Committee (ICC) at its next meeting due soon.

BSNL and Antrix could not be immediately reached for comment.