

# Thai Surveying Satellite Theos



Thailand's first geography-surveying satellite "Theos" is expected to be launched into orbit October 2007. The six-billion-baht satellite, officially called Thailand Earth Observation System (Theos), is being built by France-based Astrium S.A.S.

Equipped with two cameras, the satellite is expected to help the government better plan natural disaster management as it will be able to help monitor areas prone to floods and coastal areas at risk of being hit by tsunami waves.

"The most important benefit to us is the development of Thai personnel in the area of space technology," Science and Technology Minister Yongyuth Yuthavong said. More than 20 Thai engineers are to be trained by French experts to control it from a ground

centre to be located in Chon Buri's Si Racha district. Doing so, the officials will be able to gain skills in space technology while carrying out their operations at the control centre. Such knowledge, he said, would lay the foundations for the future development of space technology in the country. Thus far, Thais in the field have not been as strong when compared with biological sciences, which are much more popular among scientists.

Other functions of the sun-powered satellite include providing geo-referenced images for applications in cartography, land use, agricultural monitoring, forest-resource assessment and forest-fire monitoring.

Thailand's Geo-Informatics and Space Technology Development Agency (Gistda) signed a contract with the French company for it to make the satellite in 2004. However, the satellite was criticised by a Thai aerospace expert for being too expensive and for its short lifespan of five years.

He suggested the government buy photos already available from various satellites, but Gistda claims Theos would bring in estimated revenues of three billion baht by selling satellite images to other countries over the next five years.

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