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<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/space-companies-bet-big-on-pslv/article22422817.ece>

Space companies bet big on PSLV

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At least three overseas space companies have bet big on the PSLV-C40 launch of Friday. They each have put a 100-kg-class microsatellite on it as a testbed of their potential future constellations.

Also, at least two older constellation operators have brought new batches to be put in space by the Indian light-lifting launcher.

The PSLV, resuming after a failure in August, is placing these and 25 nanosatellites (up to 10 kg) in orbits 505 km away from Earth. The nanosats also carry experiments of companies and universities from multiple countries.

Rakesh Sasibhushan, CMD of Antrix Corporation, which markets the PSLV (and other ISRO services) to global satellite operators, said, "We have three important proof-of-concept microsats in C40. It is for the first time that such technology demonstrators have come together as customers on a single PSLV vehicle." There had been one or two before but in singles.

New business

"Once the technologies are proven, they may lead to their operators' firming up new constellations and the requirements for launching them in future. Hopefully they bring in more business to Antrix."

Mixed luck

On its 42nd flight and 209 foreign customers behind it, the PSLV's onus seems to be getting as big as the brand; a few of the current customers have tried other launchers but with mixed luck.

In the \$ 5.5-billion global market for satellite launch vehicles, there are not too many similar vehicles available in time and which can take up such small satellites for their operators.

About the confidence level in this flight, Mr. Sasibhushan said everyone in the space industry understands that globally, launch failures are a part of the game.

₹ 95-crore rides

Antrix, the business arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation, earns ₹95 crore from arranging the PSLV-C40 flights for 28 customer payloads, which together weigh 503 kg.

Three of the 31 going to space on it are ISRO's satellites Cartosat-2F, Microsatellite and INS-1C. For the next four years, Antrix has signed contracts worth ₹800 crore including the current crop. Without naming them, Mr. Sasibhushan said they include a couple of dedicated or fully commercial launches, which earn more money for the company.

Deals worth another ₹350 crore are in the pipeline. "The [PSLV's] market looks good and we are trying to capitalise on it to the extent possible. We hope ISRO can spare another vehicle for us so that we can target two commercial launches a year," he said.

Antrix is also looking at bigger sights and started pitching the bigger GSLV vehicle in international tenders.

For the fiscal 2017-18, Antrix expects a turnover of over ₹1900 crore, slightly more than the previous year's. ISRO is marketing only the spare PSLV capacity and is trying to increase the manufacturing capacity of the booster through industry, Mr. Sasibhushan said.