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ISRO launches desi version of Google Earth

K P Sai Kiran

NEW DELHI: India has come up with an alternative to Google Earth with its own satellite mapping geoportal- www.bhuvan.nrs.c.gov.in - which is more precise and has the benefit of better updates.

The portal which would use images taken by ISRO's series of remote sensing satellites (IRS), including Cartosat-1 and Cartosat-2, would serve the user with images having resolution up to 10 m. The portal, Bhuvan (meaning 'the earth' in Sanskrit) will provide multi-layered images and the images would be updated every year unlike Google Earth which is updated only in four years.

Union Minister of State for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences Prithviraj Chavan launched the beta version of the geoportal here on Wednesday at the one-day workshop of the Astronautical Society of India. While Google Earth shares only single layer information, its Indian counterpart would share multi-layer information using the images exclusively from indigenous satellites. The images would be visible to the user both in two and three dimensions using the navigation tools provided.

An additional feature provided by Bhuvan would be allowing the user to scroll through the newspapers of selective cities across the country. As much as 16 cities across the country are available in the portal to share their news. The user can zoom on to the city of their choice to go through the local news.

The portal takes special care of urban and rural development with readily making available the details of wastelands and ground water potentials of specific locations. Details regarding soil texture, which varies with topography, also add up to the features of the new portal. Several local problems like floods, famines, infrastructure development, education and administration would be addressed in a better way through this new mapping system.

There would be enough options available for viewing filtered information with the general inputs being incorporated in the portal using the details provided by the local communities regarding a particular area. The premier space agency envisages the expansion of the portal in the future with more features planned to be added to Bhuvan in the future to make it more useful and people friendly.