

British company delivers Beijing-1 EO satellite

British satellite manufacturer Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd (SSTL) has just completed a landmark commercial satellite contract with BLMIT - marking the first move for China to commercialise the data services from Earth observation (EO) satellites.

At a ceremony held in Beijing, the Beijing Landview Mapping Information Technology Co., Ltd (BLMIT) signed the formal in-orbit acceptance of the high resolution EO microsatellite (*Beijing-1*) system built in cooperation with BLMIT, marked the commencement of the satellite's operational commercial service for customers.



Right to left - Professor Li Wei-jian, MoST Project Manager, Sir Martin Sweeting, Madam Wu Shuang, CEO, 21st Century Company sign Beijing-1 final acceptance documents

Professor Li Wei-jian, Project Manager commented, "*This pioneering project it is the first time the Chinese government has provided operational Earth observation from space through a commercial contract and we are very pleased with the results.*"

The 166 kg *Beijing-1* is the most capable low cost Earth Observation (EO) satellite to date, carrying two payloads that provide high-resolution (4-metre) panchromatic images alongside medium-resolution (32-metre) multi-spectral images with an ultra-wide 600km imaging swath.

Beijing-1 may join the internationally coordinated Disaster Monitoring Constellation (DMC), led by SSTL, which includes satellites from Algeria, Nigeria, Turkey and UK. With 5 satellites working together, the DMC is able to gather images of a given location daily, thus mitigating cloud cover and monitoring dynamic or rapidly changing phenomena in a way single satellites cannot.

Madam Wu Shuang (CEO of BLMIT) added, *"We are very pleased with the successful cooperation with SSTL on this innovative project. Beijing-1 uses state-of-the-art small satellite technologies delivered at low cost and within just two years from contract signature. We are now ready to commence a new era of commercial EO services for our customers."*

Beijing-1 will provide the Chinese government and commercial users with information on agriculture, water resources, environment and disaster monitoring throughout China. The satellite will be used extensively for monitoring urban development and pollution, especially in the lead up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and to generate digital maps of China using the high-resolution panchromatic imager. The satellite is capable of continuously imaging Chinese territory even at the longest landmass track (3000 km) and transmit images to the groundstation in Beijing in real-time at high speed (40Mbps) with on-board programmable compression. Image data gathered outside the reach of the groundstation is stored on-board in a hard disc mass storage device for retrieval at night or later on demand.

BLMIT, a private company established to manage the commercial data distribution and services of *Beijing-1*, is undertaking a project to obtain cloud-free images to map the whole China within 6 months.

SSTL Group CEO, Sir Martin Sweeting said, *"We are very pleased that our Chinese customer is so satisfied with the in-orbit performance of our latest operational high resolution EO microsatellite. This has reconfirmed SSTL's capability to deliver a fully operational EO system at low cost and to a tight schedule. We have also found working with our customers in BLMIT very positive."*

The *Beijing-1* microsatellite, launched in October 2005 with a life expectancy of over five years, cost approximately £10M manufactured and delivered into a 686km low Earth orbit by SSTL. BLMIT and SSTL have since been working together to evaluate its performance in orbit and also exploring its full operational potential, offered by the 14 different operational modes and re-configurable on-board hardware and the software to respond to the requirements of end-users in the most timely and cost-effective way.

About Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd

Surrey Satellite Technology Limited is an enterprise company formed in 1985 by the University of Surrey to commercialise the results of its innovative small satellite engineering research. SSTL was the first professional organisation to offer low-cost small satellites with rapid response employing advanced terrestrial technologies. Over two decades, we have built a profitable business around our unique approach to space.

Today, SSTL employs over 200 staff and has been involved in 26 small satellite missions, making it the most successful and experienced small satellite supplier in the world.

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