

Japan plans giant broadband satellite

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Japanese government officials say they will develop a new communications satellite to provide broadband services that are as fast as fiber optic cable.

Japan's Internal Affairs and Communications Ministry said the new satellite will make it possible to send and receive data at a maximum speed of 100 megabits per second in mountainous areas and remote islands, as well as aboard Shinkansen bullet trains, airplanes and ships.

The ministry plans to incorporate research and development funding in its fiscal 2006 budget request and plans to begin services by 2015.

Officials noted since satellites are immune to damage by earthquakes or floods, they can be used to send live images of disaster-stricken areas and provide information to disaster victims.

The satellite will have a dish antenna measuring 66 feet in diameter. It will be four times larger in diameter and 16 times larger in surface area than a conventional satellite antenna.

The satellite will be able to receive weak signals -- even a cell phone with relatively low power output would be able to communicate at a maximum speed of 10 megabits per second, or at least four times faster than existing third generation cell phones.

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