BlueBird Block-2, Features, Weight, Orbit, Importance

December 24, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com

The **BlueBird Block-2 Mission** marks a significant milestone in India's space launch capabilities and global commercial space services. The mission involves the launch of a next-generation communication satellite of **AST SpaceMobile, USA**, using **ISRO's LVM3 (Gaganyaan-class heavy-lift rocket)**. Officially designated as **LVM3-M6 / BlueBird Block-2**, this mission represents the **6th operational flight of LVM3** and highlights India's growing role in deploying advanced commercial satellites into Low Earth Orbit (LEO).

What is BlueBird Block-2?

BlueBird Block-2 is a next-generation space-based cellular broadband satellite developed by AST SpaceMobile. It is designed to deliver direct-to-mobile connectivity, enabling ordinary smartphones to connect to satellites without relying on terrestrial infrastructure.

Capabilities of BlueBird Block-2

- Provides **4G and 5G connectivity directly to standard smartphones**
- Supports:
    - Voice calls

    - Video calls
    - Text messaging
    - Internet data services
- Operates **without ground towers, dish antennas, or special handsets**
- Offers **global, continuous (24/7) coverage**

Features of BlueBird Block-2 Satellite

- **Heaviest Commercial Satellite to LEO:** BlueBird Block-2 weighs approximately **6,100 kg**, making it the **heaviest payload ever placed into Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** by India's LVM3 launch vehicle.
- **Massive Phased-Array Antenna:** It carries a **223 m² phased-array antenna**, the **largest commercial communications antenna deployed in LEO**, enabling strong direct connectivity.
- **Direct-to-Mobile Connectivity:** The satellite is designed to provide **4G and 5G services directly to standard smartphones** without special antennas or hardware.
- **Global Coverage:** It supports **voice calls, video calls, messaging, streaming, and high-speed data** worldwide, including remote and underserved regions.
- **Part of a LEO Constellation:** BlueBird Block-2 is part of AST SpaceMobile's global **Low Earth Orbit satellite network** aimed at universal mobile broadband connectivity.

LVM3-M6 Mission

The LVM3-M6 mission is a dedicated commercial launch undertaken to place the BlueBird Block-2 communication satellite into Low Earth Orbit. The mission is executed through NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), **ISRO**'s commercial arm, underscoring India's expanding footprint in the global space launch market.

- **Mission Name:** LVM3-M6 / BlueBird Block-2
- **Launch Vehicle:** LVM3 (GSLV Mk-III)
- **Launch Site:** Second Launch Pad, SDSC SHAR, Sriharikota
- **Payload:** BlueBird Block-2 Communication Satellite
- **Client:** AST SpaceMobile, USA
- **Orbit:** Low Earth Orbit (LEO)

This mission is notable for carrying the largest and heaviest commercial communication satellite ever deployed in LEO.

Why is this mission important?

- **Direct-to-Mobile Connectivity:** Enables ordinary smartphones to connect **directly to the satellite** without relying on ground towers or special devices, benefiting **remote areas, oceans, and disaster-prone regions**.
- **Major Commercial Milestone:** Executed through **NewSpace India Limited**, the mission demonstrates India's capability to launch **heavy commercial payloads**, strengthening its position in the **global space launch market**.

- **Part of Global LEO Constellation:** Contributes to **AST SpaceMobile's worldwide Low Earth Orbit satellite network**, enhancing global cellular broadband coverage.
- **Technological Demonstration:** Showcases India's **advanced launch vehicle technology (LVM3)** and precision orbital insertion for extremely heavy payloads, reinforcing confidence in ISRO's engineering expertise.
- **Strategic and Societal Impact:** Supports **telecommunication expansion, disaster management, and connectivity in underserved regions**, aligning with global digital inclusion initiatives.

LVM3 Three-Stage Configuration

The LVM3 (GSLV Mk-III) is a three-stage heavy-lift launch vehicle designed to place large satellites into Low Earth Orbit and Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit. Its configuration combines solid, liquid, and cryogenic propulsion, ensuring high thrust at lift-off and precise orbital insertion.

1. First Stage: S200 Solid Strap-On Boosters

- LVM3 uses **two S200 solid rocket boosters** attached on either side of the core stage.
- Each booster contains around **200 tonnes of solid propellant**, making them among the largest solid boosters in operation globally.
- These boosters provide the **maximum thrust during lift-off**, accounting for nearly **80–85% of the total thrust** at launch.
- Their primary role is to overcome Earth's gravity and atmospheric drag in the initial phase of flight.
- The S200 boosters are developed by **Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC)**.
- After burnout, the boosters are **jettisoned** to reduce weight and improve flight efficiency.

2. Second Stage: L110 Liquid Core Stage

- The **L110** is the central liquid-fuel stage of LVM3.
- It uses **liquid propellants (UDMH and N_2O_4)** and is powered by **two Vikas engines**.
- This stage provides **controlled and sustained thrust** after the solid boosters separate.
- The L110 stage ensures **vehicle stability, trajectory correction, and velocity buildup** during the mid-phase of the ascent.
- It bridges the transition from high-thrust lift-off to precise orbital insertion.
- After completing its burn, the L110 stage is also **separated** from the vehicle.

3. Third Stage: C25 Cryogenic Upper Stage

- The **C25 stage** is the most technologically advanced stage of LVM3.
- It is powered by an **indigenously developed cryogenic engine (CE-20)**.
- The engine uses **liquid hydrogen (LH_2) as fuel and liquid oxygen (LOX) as oxidiser**.
- Cryogenic propulsion provides **very high efficiency and specific impulse**, crucial for placing heavy payloads into precise orbits.

- This stage performs the **final orbital insertion**, whether into **LEO or Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO)**.
- The C25 stage has been designed and developed by ISRO's **Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC)**.

Track Record of LVM3 Missions

- **Proven National Mission Reliability:** LVM3 has successfully launched **Chandrayaan-2 and Chandrayaan-3**, demonstrating its capability for **complex scientific and lunar missions**.
- **Successful Commercial Deployments:** It has completed **two OneWeb missions**, placing **72 satellites into Low Earth Orbit**, establishing India as a **trusted partner for large commercial satellite launches**.
- **Recent Operational Success:** The **LVM3-M5 / CMS-03 mission** was successfully executed in **November 2025**, carrying a 4,400 kg communication satellite, showcasing the vehicle's **consistent reliability**.

About Semi-Cryogenic Engine in India

- **Indigenous Development:** India is developing the **SCE-200 semi-cryogenic engine** indigenously at **ISRO's Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC)** to power future heavy-lift rockets.
- **Fuel and Oxidizer:** Uses **kerosene (RP-1) as fuel** and **liquid oxygen (LOX) as oxidizer**, offering higher efficiency than conventional liquid engines.
- **High Payload Capability:** Designed to **enhance payload capacity** to **GTO and LEO**, supporting heavier satellites and ambitious space missions.
- **Cost-Effective Launches:** The semi-cryogenic engine allows **reduced launch costs** due to better fuel efficiency and potential for **partial reusability**.
- **Strategic Significance:** Strengthens India's **indigenous heavy-lift launch capability**, boosting commercial competitiveness and supporting national space exploration goals.

Source: https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/bluebird-block-2/
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