

Japan eyes building its own GPS system

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A Japanese rocket takes off carrying satellites at the Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima prefecture in the south of the country. Japan is considering launching new satellites to establish its own global positioning system (GPS) in a bid to reduce its reliance on the US navigation network, officials said on Wednesday.

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In September, Japan launched a rocket carrying its first [satellite](#) intended to improve GPS systems widely used by Japanese motorists for navigation as well as by aviation and maritime operators.

The government's space development strategy headquarters, headed by Prime Minister Naoto Kan, is now discussing plans to launch additional satellites, said an official.

"There is a proposal that our country should secure its own GPS as it is now fully relying on the US system," the official said.

"The new system may also open our opportunity for marketing GPS services to other Asian countries," he said, adding that the government plans to reach a final decision by August.

The Yomiuri Shimbun daily reported on Wednesday that Japan had decided to launch six to seven new satellites to establish its own GPS system by 2014 and 2015 to cover the entire Asia-Pacific region.

By using both the new satellites and American GPS in combination, [Japan](#) could raise the degree of precision of car navigation systems 10-fold, the mass-circulation said.

The government plans to charge private [GPS](#) operators some 13 billion yen (158 million dollars) per year for using the system as it would cost more than 200 billion yen to launch six satellites, it said.

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