

Japan launches hi-tech global rainfall satellite (Update)

February 27 2014



Japan's H-IIA rocket moves to the launching pad at the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima prefecture, Japan's southern island of Kyushu on February 27, 2014

Japan successfully launched its latest rocket on Friday, carrying a hi-tech satellite to monitor global rainfall and help meteorologists forecast big storms, according to the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

The H-IIA rocket blasted off from a southern Japanese island at 3:37 am

on Friday (1837 GMT Thursday) as scheduled, with the Global Precipitation Measurement (GPM) core observatory aboard, JAXA said.

The satellite, jointly developed by Japan and the United States, is designed to collect data from several other satellites in orbit and add that to its own measurements to build up a detailed picture of precipitation around the planet.

Weather forecasters say that with a more detailed and complete map of rain they will be better able to predict extreme events such as typhoons and floods.

On Thursday, Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata, who is now aboard the International Space Station along with NASA astronaut Rick Mastracchio and Russia's Mikhail Tyurin, told his 74,000 Twitter followers he was hoping for a smooth launch.

"From the ISS, I wish for the success of the launch," he wrote.

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