

Japan again delays launch of asteroid probe

November 30 2014



In this file photo, a rocket is seen lifting off from the space centre on Japan's southern island of Tanegashima, on May 24, 2014

Japan on Sunday delayed the launch of a space probe designed to mine an asteroid for a second time due to bad weather.

The blast-off of Hayabusa2 was now pushed back by two days to 1:22 pm (0422 GMT) on Wednesday, the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) said.

The agency said it decided on the second postponement due to fears of

[strong winds](#), and warned that the launch could be delayed further depending on the weather.

JAXA had originally planned to launch Hayabusa2 on Sunday, but delayed it to Monday due to a forecast of thick cloud and then announced the latest postponement.

The [space probe](#) will begin a six-year mission after its blast-off aboard Japan's main H-IIA rocket from Tanegashima Space Center in the south of the country.

The 31 billion yen (\$260 million) project will send the explorer towards the 1999JU3 asteroid in [deep space](#).

It will blast a crater in the asteroid to collect materials unexposed to millennia of wind and radiation, in the hope of answering some fundamental questions about life and the universe.

Hayabusa2 will take off only weeks after a European spacecraft's historic landing on a comet captivated the world's attention.

It is expected to reach the asteroid in mid-2018 and spend around 18 months near it.

It will also study the surface by dropping [tiny robots](#). If all goes well, asteroid samples will be returned to Earth in late 2020.

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