

Japan rocket launches its first commercial satellite (Update)

November 24 2015



Japan's H-IIA rocket lifts off from the launch pad at the Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima prefecture on November 24, 2015

A Japanese rocket lifted off Tuesday and successfully put the national space programme's first commercial satellite into orbit, officials said, as Tokyo tries to enter a business dominated by European and Russian companies.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries oversaw the launch from Tanegashima Space Center in southwest Japan.

The launch of the H-IIA rocket was originally scheduled at 3:23 pm (0623 GMT), but was delayed by roughly 30 minutes because a small ship unexpectedly came near the space station.

The rocket successfully launched at 3:50 pm, carrying the TELSTAR 12V communications and broadcasting satellite for Canadian satellite operator Telesat.

About four and a half hours later, it released the payload as planned, said an official of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

"The release was successful and the satellite is on course to the scheduled orbit," the official told AFP.

The satellite later successfully entered an oval orbit, Kyodo News reported.

Japan wants to become a major player in the satellite launching business. It has tried to improve the H-IIA rocket to cut the cost of each launch to make its programme competitive.

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