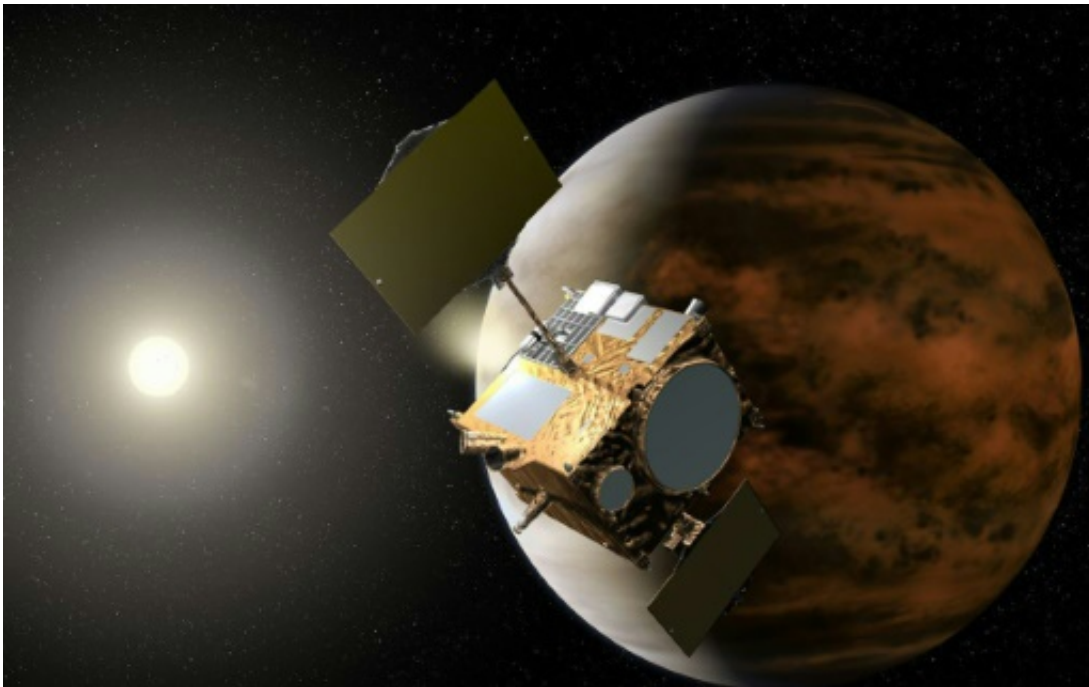


Japanese space probe goes into orbit around Venus

December 9 2015



An artist's impression of the Planet-C Venus Climate Orbiter, nicknamed "Akatsuki" or "Dawn", orbiting Venus

Japan's space agency said Wednesday its "Akatsuki" probe had successfully entered into orbit around Venus after an initial attempt at reaching the second planet from the sun failed five years ago.

The success marks the first time a Japanese space [probe](#) has entered into the [orbit](#) of another planet, according to Japan Aerospace Exploration

Agency (JAXA).

"The probe is functioning properly," Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) project manager Masato Nakamura said during a press conference.

"We'll conduct an initial observation for three months... We'll then shift to full observation in April," he said.

Akatsuki, meaning dawn, blasted off in 2010 on a 25.2 billion yen (\$205 million at current exchange rates) mission to observe the toxic atmosphere and super-hot volcanic surface of Venus.

But the box-shaped probe failed to enter the planet's [gravitational pull](#) and shot past it, forcing JAXA technicians to make the second attempt.

The successful Venus orbit came a week after another Japanese space probe, "Hayabusa 2", passed by Earth to harness the planet's gravitational pull to propel it toward a far away asteroid in its quest to study the origin of the solar system.

The explorer conducted an "Earth swing-by" and came as close as 3,090 kilometres (1,900 miles) above the planet's surface, before switching its orbit to continue towards the tiny Ryugu asteroid.

Hayabusa 2 was launched a year ago on a six-year mission to bring back mineral samples from the asteroid.

It is expected to reach Ryugu, named after a mythical castle in a Japanese folk tale, in mid-2018.

If all goes well, soil samples will be returned to Earth in late 2020.

Analysing the extra-terrestrial materials could help shed light on the birth of the solar system 4.6 billion years ago and offer clues about what gave rise to life on Earth, scientists have said.

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