

China launches new carrier rocket: state media

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China blasted off its "Long March-7" new generation carrier rocket on a successful inaugural voyage Saturday from a new launch centre, state media reported, as the country races ahead with an ambitious space programme.

The medium-sized, two-stage rocket is expected to become the main carrier for China's future [space](#) missions.

It can carry up to 13.5 tonnes to low-Earth orbit—a payload one and a half times greater than those of China's existing rockets.

"The more our rockets can lift, the farther we can venture into space," Ma Zhonghui, the rocket's chief designer told the official Xinhua news agency.

"Long March-7's successful maiden flight will greatly lift up China's comprehensive space capacity, and give the country a hefty boost in building itself into a space power," he added.

Its re-entry module is scheduled to return to Earth at a desert in Inner Mongolia Sunday afternoon after orbiting the planet 13 times.

The launch was the first to be held at a new space launch centre in Wenchang, a city in the southern province of Hainan.

Completed in 2014, it is China's fourth such facility.

China plans to [launch](#) its largest carrier [rocket](#), the Long March-5, from the same site later this year, a senior space program official told Xinhua.

The country launched its first manned spaceflight in 2003, and hopes to operate its own space station by around 2022, according to the agency.

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