

Strike-delayed European rocket launch to go ahead

May 3 2017



This photo taken on February 14, 2017 shows the Ariane 5 rocket lifting off from the Ariane Launchpad Area at the European Spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana

A satellite launch delayed since March 20 due to a crippling general strike in French Guiana, will go ahead on Thursday, launch firm Arianespace said.

An Ariane 5 rocket is set to hoist two [telecommunications satellites](#), one South Korean and the other Brazilian, into Earth orbit from Europe's [space port](#) in Kourou, Guiana,

The French territory was hit by more than a month of disruptions following a general strike, which saw workers erecting barricades around the [space centre](#) and delaying the launch several times.

The blockade was lifted on April 22, allowing for preparations to start afresh.

Weather permitting, liftoff is scheduled for a window between 5.31 pm and 8.19 pm Kourou time—2031 and 2319 GMT, said Arianespace.

The mission, from launch to separation of the satellites from the rocket, will last about 37 minutes.

One of the satellites, called SGDC, will provide strategic communications for the Brazilian government and military, and beam broadband services across the country, helping to provide internet access to remote and underserved communities.

The other, KOREASAT-7 owned by South Korea's KTsatsat, will provide a range of video and data services over Korea, the Philippines, Southeast Asia, India and Indonesia.

The Kourou space centre has become a symbol of economic disparity in Guiana and a focus for anger, given that many locals have no electricity or running water and around one in four is jobless.

Workers downed tools against what they said was decades of under-investment in the French territory in South America.

The paralysing strike by 37 unions was called off after the French government pledged an aid package worth billions of euros.

Guiana, home to some 250,000 people, has been administered as a French region since the end of the 18th century.

The labour action had delayed two other launches as well, and Ariespace chief executive officer Stephane Israel has estimated the total loss at about 500,000 euros (\$546,000) per day for the company and its partners.

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