

Japan postpones 'Moon Sniper' liftoff for third time

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Japan's space agency on Monday postponed for the third time the launch of its "Moon Sniper" lunar mission due to poor weather.

The H2-A rocket due to blast off from the southern island of Tanegashima was also carrying a research satellite developed with NASA and the European Space Agency.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) gave no new date for the start of the mission, which comes after India successfully landed a probe on the Moon last week.

MHI Launch Services, the rocket co-developer, said on the social media platform X that the mission was called off "because it was confirmed that the upper wind does not satisfy the constraints at launch".

Last week India landed a craft near the Moon's south pole, a historic triumph for the world's most populous nation and its low-cost space program.

Previously, only the United States, Russia and China had managed to put a spacecraft on the lunar surface, and none on the south pole.

India's success came days after a Russian probe crashed in the same region, and four years after a previous Indian attempt failed at the last moment.

Japan has also tried before, attempting last year to land a lunar probe named Omotenashi, carried on NASA's Artemis 1, but the mission went wrong and communications were lost.

In April, Japanese start-up ispace failed in an ambitious attempt to become the first private company to land on the Moon, losing communication after what the firm called a "hard landing".

The "Moon Sniper" is so called because JAXA is aiming to land it within 100 metres (330 feet) of a specific target on the Moon, far less than the

usual range of several kilometers.

Japan has also had problems with launch rockets, with failures after liftoff of the next-generation H3 model in March and the normally reliable solid-fuel Epsilon the previous October.

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