

Japan space agency says test flight for new flagship rocket is rescheduled for Saturday

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An H3 rocket lifts off from Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima, southern

Japan on March 7, 2023. Japan's space agency on Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2024, postponed the second test flight of its new flagship rocket H3 series that was planned for this week because of bad weather forecasts at the launch site, as space officials scramble to ensure a successful liftoff a year after a failed debut flight. Credit: Kyodo News via AP

Japan's space agency says its new flagship H3 rocket will have a second test flight on Saturday, two days later than an initially planned liftoff that was postponed due to a bad weather forecast at the launch site in southwestern Japan.

The [liftoff](#) was originally scheduled for Thursday but was postponed due to thunder and strong wind forecasted at the Tanegashima Space Center.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, said Wednesday that its H3 [rocket](#) will attempt a [test flight](#) on Saturday with an alternative launch window through the end of March.

JAXA has been developing H3 for more than a decade as a successor to its current mainstay, H-2A, which has just two more flights planned before its retirement.

The upcoming launch is being closely watched as a test for Japan's space development after H3 failed in its debut flight last March, when the rocket had to be destroyed along with its payload, the advanced land observation satellite, or ALOS-3. This time, the rocket will carry a mockup of the ALOS satellite, called VEP-4.



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JAXA says the mission's primary goal for the second test flight is to put the rocket into the intended trajectory. The agency also wants to place two observation microsatellites into orbit.

H3 is designed to carry larger payloads than H-2A at much lower costs to be globally competitive.

Expectations are high following a recent streak of successes. JAXA made a historic precision moon landing last month of its spacecraft that had been launched from the H-2A rocket, days after the 48th H-2A rocket successfully placed a spy satellite into its planned orbit.

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