

Japan's space agency delays launch of upgraded observation satellite on new H3 rocket due to weather

June 28 2024, by Mari Yamaguchi



The logo of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, is seen at its Tanegashima Space Center in Minamitanecho, Kagoshima prefecture, Feb. 16, 2024. Japan's space agency said Friday, June 28, 2024 its planned launch this weekend of a satellite on its new flagship H3 rocket will be postponed until Monday due to expected bad weather. Credit: Kyodo News via AP, File

Japan's space agency said Friday its planned launch this weekend of a satellite on its new flagship H3 rocket will be postponed until Monday due to expected bad weather.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, or JAXA, said it is postponing the launch because of rain and thunder predicted for Saturday night when the [rocket](#) was to be moved to the launch site at the Tanegashima Space Center on a southwestern Japanese island.

The launch was initially scheduled for Sunday.

The rocket will be carrying an Advanced Land Observation Satellite, ALOS-4, tasked primarily with Earth observation and data collection for [disaster response](#) and mapmaking, as well as with monitoring military activity, such as missile launches, with an infrared sensor developed by the Defense Ministry. The ALOS-4 is a successor to the current ALOS-2 and can observe a much wider area. Japan will operate both for the time being.

The launch will be the H3's third, after a successful launch on Feb. 17 that followed a shocking failed debut flight a year earlier when the rocket had to be destroyed with its payload—a satellite that was supposed to be the ALOS-3.

Japan sees a stable, commercially competitive space transport capability as key to the country's space program and national security.

JAXA and its main contractor Mitsubishi Heavy Industries have been developing H3 as a successor to its current mainstay, H-2A, which is set to retire after two more flights. MHI will eventually take over H3 production and launches from JAXA and hopes to make it commercially viable by cutting the [launch](#) cost to about half of the H-2A.

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Citation: Japan's space agency delays launch of upgraded observation satellite on new H3 rocket due to weather (2024, June 28) retrieved 30 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-06-japan-space-agency-delays-satellite.html>

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