

Bolivia's first telecoms satellite launched from China

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People watch the launch in China of the Tupac Katari Bolivian telecommunications satellite, at Plaza Murillo in La Paz, on December 20, 2013

A Chinese rocket launched Bolivia's first telecommunications satellite early Saturday with the president of the South American country declaring it a success.

The Long March-3B carrier rocket blasted off from the Xichang [satellite](#)

launch centre in China's southwestern Sichuan province at 00:42 am (1640 GMT Friday), television images showed.

Chinese state news agency Xinhua reported that China had "successfully" sent the satellite "into orbit".

"I'm very happy, satisfied and moved by the successful launch" of satellite Tupac Katari, said Bolivian President Evo Morales, who travelled to China for the mission.

It was the first time a foreign head of state had witnessed a satellite launch in China, Xinhua reported.

The [launch](#) was beamed live on Bolivian television and hundreds of people watched the event on a giant screen at the Plaza de Armas, the site of Bolivia's parliament, in La Paz.

The satellite, which is expected to be operational in March 2014, has cost \$300 million (220 million euros) and has been 85 percent financed by a loan from the Chinese Development Bank.

It was named after an indigenous leader who fought against Spanish colonial rule.

According to Bolivia's National Space Agency, it will deliver telecoms services to 30 percent of the 10 million Bolivians who live in rural areas.

The satellite's cost has been criticised though in light of the country's high poverty rate.

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