Beat: Miscellaneous

Japan`s asteroid probe to lift off on Monday after delay

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USPA News - The Japanese space probe Hayabusa2 will lift off on Monday to begin a six-year mission to obtain samples from a distant asteroid before returning back to Earth, officials decided on Saturday, a day after a previous launch date was called off due to bad weather. Japan`s Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) said officials held an emergency meeting on Saturday and decided to conduct the launch on Monday at 1:22:43 p.m. local time (0422 GMT).

Hayabusa2 will lift off aboard the H-IIA rocket from the Yoshinobu Launch Complex at the Tanegashima Space Center in southern Japan. JAXA was forced to call off Sunday afternoon`s scheduled launch due to a weather forecast calling for thick clouds, including a freezing layer, which exceed the restrictions for suitable weather. "The launch may be delayed further depending on weather conditions and other factors," officials cautioned on Saturday. Hayabusa2 is expected to arrive at the 1999 JU3 asteroid in deep space in mid-2018, after which it will land on the surface and detonate an explosive device to take samples. JAXA hopes the samples will provide an insight into the origin and evolution of the solar system and the raw materials of life. After spending about 1.5 year on the surface of the asteroid, the probe will take the samples to Earth, where it is scheduled to arrive in late 2020. The launch of Hayabusa2 comes just weeks after the European Space Agency`s Philae probe made history by becoming the first spacecraft to land on a comet. Japan`s mission is the successor of Hayabusa, which landed on the 25143 Itokawa asteroid in late 2005 to take samples. Hayabusa returned to Earth in June 2010, making it the first time a sample had been collected from the surface of an asteroid.

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