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## Martian satellite begins remote-sensing surveys

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China's first Martian satellite — the orbiter of the Tianwen 1 mission — has started conducting remote-sensing surveys of the Red Planet, the China National Space Administration said on Monday.

The administration said in a statement that the orbiter carried out its fifth flight maneuver on Monday to enter an elliptical orbit for remote-sensing operations.

Traveling in an orbit with its nearest point 265 kilometers from Mars,

the craft now circles the planet three and a half times each day to use its seven scientific mission payloads, including a mineral spectrometer and a high-resolution camera, to gather information about the planet's geological structure, soil types, spatial environments and atmospheric ionized layer as well as other crucial elements, it said, adding that the satellite will continue to relay signals between the Zhurong rover and ground controllers.

The orbiter's designers at the Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight

Technology said that as of Tuesday, the craft had orbited Mars for 272 days and its equipment was in good condition.

Tianwen 1, named after an ancient Chinese poem, was launched on July 23 last year from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province, becoming the nation's first independent interplanetary exploration mission.

The spacecraft stack consisted of two major components — a rover and an orbiter. It traveled more than 470 million km and carried out several trajectory maneuvers before

entering Martian orbit on Feb 10. Zhurong touched down on the planet on May 15 and separated from its landing platform a week later.

By Monday evening, Zhurong had worked 177 days and traveled 1,253 meters on the Red Planet, which was about 384 million km from Earth.

As of mid-October, the Tianwen 1 mission had generated more than 420 gigabytes of primary data, with Zhurong alone having obtained about 10 GB of primary data, according to sources at the space administration.