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CHINA DAILY 香港版 HONG KONG

FRIDAY, August 4, 2023 中国日報 www.chinadailyhk.com HK $10

Satellite to aid climate change monitoring

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China launched a meteorological satellite on Thursday for weather forecasting, climate change monitoring and research on atmospheric chemistry.

A Long March 4C carrier rocket lifted off at 11:47 am at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China and flew about 22 minutes before placing the Fengyun 3F into a sun-synchronous orbit, according to the China National Space Administration.

The administration said in a news release that the satellite is equipped with 10 pieces of advanced equipment including a hyperspectral infrared atmospheric sounder, a microwave temperature sounder and a device to measure Earth radiation. The satellite will replace the Fengyun 3C, which has been operating for nearly 10 years and should have retired years ago, it said.

Fengyun 3F is mainly tasked with obtaining three-dimensional, multispectral data of atmosphere and land and ocean surfaces around the world. It will be specifically used to monitor global ozone distribution, ice and snow coverage, sea temperatures, natural disasters and ecosystems, the administration said.

Its work will help improve short-term climate predictions, climate change forecasts, climate emergency responses as well as disaster prevention and relief, it added.

Wang Jinhua, chief designer of the Fengyun 3F, said on Thursday that the mission payloads on the satellite represent the country's latest meteorological detection technology.

"What is notable is that the satellite is capable of collecting atmospheric temperature and humidity profiles in a frequent, accurate manner. Such data is not only meaningful in improving the accuracy of weather forecasts and climate change predictions, but also very helpful in strengthening the timeliness of forecasting disastrous weather," he said.

China launched its first weather satellite, Fengyun 1A, in 1988. Since then, it has lifted 21 Fengyun meteorological satellites into space. Currently, the nation operates 10 weather satellites — two Fengyun 4 series, three Fengyun 2 series and five Fengyun 3 series.

Thursday's space mission was China's 32nd rocket launch this year and the 481st flight of the Long March rocket family. It was also the 100th launch of the Long March 4 rocket series.

The rocket and satellite launched on Thursday were both built by Shanghai Academy of Spaceflight Technology, one of the major subsidiaries of China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp, the nation's leading space contractor.

Li Hongyang contributed to this story.