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# CHINADAILY

WEDNESDAY, December 24, 2025

中國日報

[www.chinadailyhk.com](http://www.chinadailyhk.com) HK \$12

## China's new reusable rocket makes debut flight in Jiuquan

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China conducted the debut flight of the Long March 12A carrier rocket on Tuesday, with the launch mission succeeding while the recovery attempt ended in failure.

A 70.4-meter-high Long March 12A, the tallest space vehicle China

has ever built, blasted off at 10 am from a newly constructed service tower at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

After a short flight, the rocket's second-stage booster reached its preset orbital position, but the first-stage booster did not land on a designated recovery site in the neighboring Gansu province.

According to the China National Space Administration, engineers have started to investigate the failed recovery attempt.

It said that during the flight, engineers obtained critical technical data, laying a solid foundation for launching and recovering reusable rockets in the future.

The Long March 12A model is designed and built by the Shang-

hai Academy of Spaceflight Technology, a subsidiary of the State-owned conglomerate China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp, becoming the first reusable launch vehicle from the conglomerate to undertake a flight mission.

The rocket's main body is 3.8 meters wide while the fairing — the top structure on a rocket that contains satellites or other payloads —

has a diameter of 4.2 meters.

With a liftoff weight of 437 metric tons, it is able to transport at least 6 tons of payload to a low-Earth orbit.

China has been striving to develop a fleet of reusable rockets that can tremendously reduce launch costs and improve the efficiency and frequency of space missions.

Earlier this month, Chinese commercial space company LandSpace launched its ZQ 3 reusable rocket from the Jiuquan spaceport. The rocket managed to reach orbit, but

the attempt to recover its first-stage booster failed.

Globally, the best-known reusable rocket is SpaceX's Falcon 9, which has made many launches with reused boosters.

Blue Origin, another commercial space firm in the United States, also completed its first successful landing of the first stage of its New Glenn rocket in a recent mission.

Both SpaceX and Blue Origin have had many failures in their recovery attempts before achieving the feat.