

JAXA's Earth Observation Missions

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The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) is promoting the Earth observation from space. JAXA is now operating GOSAT (the Green House Gases Observing Satellite) and GCOM-W1 (the Global Change Observation Mission 1st-Water). The GOSAT mission is a joint effort of JAXA, the National Institute for Environmental Studies (NIES) and the Ministry of the Environment (MOE). GOSAT has been launched in January 2009, and is equipped with the Fourier Transform Spectrometer and the Cloud Aerosol Imager providing global distribution of carbon dioxide and methane with seasonal changes. GCOM-W1 was launched in May 2012 for global water cycle observation and has the AMSR-2 (Advanced Microwave Scanning Radiometer 2). AMSR-2 follows the design of AMSR which was aboard ADEOS-2 satellite, but with improvements in antenna size and onboard calibration, etc. JAXA is also operating the Precipitation Radar (PR) aboard the TRMM (Tropical Rainfall Measuring Mission) satellite and Advanced Microwave Scanning Radiometer (AMSR-E) aboard Aqua satellite of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). TRMM is a joint venture of JAXA and NASA. The TRMM satellite was launched in 1997 and is still in operation. The Precipitation Radar (PR) aboard the TRMM satellite is the first spaceborne radar dedicated for precipitation observation developed by JAXA and the National Institute of Information and Communications Technology, Japan (NICT). The data from PR for more than 16 years contributed much for better understanding the precipitation system climatology over tropical and subtropical regions. The Global Precipitation Measurement (GPM) which is led by JAXA and NASA with international collaboration is a multi-satellite system dedicated for the global precipitation observation. The core satellite of GPM will be launched by JAXA at the end of February 2014. JAXA has developed the dual-wavelength radar (DPR) with NICT for the GPM core satellite. DPR will observe rain including solid precipitation with better accuracy than TRMM PR. The ALOS-2 (Advanced Lang Observing Satellite-2) which is equipped with an L-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (PALSAR) is scheduled to launch in 2014. ALOS-2 is a follow-on mission from ALOS contributing to cartography, disaster monitoring, resource survey, etc. EarthCARE for cloud and aerosol observation is a collaboration mission with the European Space Agency (ESA). JAXA has developed a W-band Cloud Profiling Radar (CPR) with NICT for EarthCARE. CPR has high sensitivity to clouds with Doppler function. Using the Doppler function CPR can measure the vertical movement of clouds which is important to understand the cloudy systems. JAXA is also developing GCOM-C1 (the Global Change Observation Mission 1st-Climate) which is for surface and atmospheric measurements related to the carbon cycle and radiation budget. An SGLI (Second Generation Global Imager) will be aboard the satellite. JAXA is also studying future sensors including small sensors for the International Space Station (ISS).

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