



Report

Japan -- Media Expresses Confidence in Japan's Future Role in Space Development

In the wake of the successful 11 September maiden launch of the domestically developed H-2B rocket from Japan's Tanegashima Space Center and the successful 18 September docking of Japan's HTV unmanned spacecraft with the International Space Station (ISS), Japanese media called for further efforts in space development. Press reports asserted Japan can fill the void left with the coming retirement of the US space shuttle fleet and officials expressed support for future Japanese manned spacecraft. Media also highlighted the good prospects for Japan's commercial success in the space launch field.

Editorials in Japan's largest dailies praised the successful H-2B launch and HTV docking and called for government and public support for expanded efforts in space.

- Following the H-2B's successful launch, Japan's largest daily, center-right *Yomiuri Shimbun*, declared that "we can now dare to dream that people could one day travel into space aboard the vehicle." The paper called on the new DPJ administration to "lay the foundation for further space technology development" (11 September).
- In the wake of the HTV's successful docking with the International Space Station (ISS), *Asahi* asserted that Japan has "effectively announced to the world that it is a major player" in space technology and that it is time for a "broad debate" within the country on the "merits of manned space flights" (22 September).

Press reports and commentators asserted Japan can now fill a void that will be created when the US space shuttle fleet is decommissioned next year.

- *Yomiuri* reported that the HTV will become the "only vehicle" capable of transporting "large-scale experimental equipment" after the retirement of the US space shuttle (11 September).
- Japan's second-largest daily, center-left *Asahi Shimbun*, quoted Fujio Nakano, a representative of Sora-no-kai, a private think tank on space policy, as observing that "Japan has obtained a precious trump card" as Russia, the only country capable of sending people to the ISS after the decommissioning of the space shuttles, is "certain to charge more" (11 September).

Government officials for the first time expressed support for Japan's own manned spacecraft and spoke expansively of Japan's future space program.

- *Yomiuri* quoted Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism Minister Seiji Maehara as saying that Japan should "develop its capability to launch manned spacecraft on its own" and that his ministry would study such plans. The paper noted this was the first

time a minister in charge of Japan's space development indicated a desire to develop manned spacecraft (30 September).

- *Asahi* reported Maehara as saying he also intends to create a unified space agency "akin to a Japanese version of NASA" (22 September).

H-2B, HTV Represent Cutting Edge of Japanese Space Technology

The **H-2B**, at 56 meters long and 530 tons, is Japan's largest domestically-produced rocket. The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) jointly developed the H-2B, which can carry larger loads due to its incorporation of two of the engines used in Japan's previous mainstay rocket, the single-engine H-2A (*Yomiuri*, 11 September). The successful maiden launch of the H-2B marked the tenth straight successful rocket launch for Japan. JAXA President Keiji Tachikawa noted that Japan is one of only five nations with a successful launch rate of over 90% (*Nikkei*, 15 September).

The **HTV** is a cylinder measuring 4.4 meters in diameter and 10 meters in length with the capacity to carry 6 tons of supplies and equipment. While other spacecraft capable of supplying the ISS, such as Europe's Automated Transfer Vehicle (ATV), have a larger load capacity, the HTV has the largest hatch diameter at 1.2 meters, allowing it to transfer larger equipment. In addition, there are plans to develop a manned spacecraft based on the HTV, which has a pressurized compartment and three "fail-safe systems" designed to protect vital components. Japan plans to launch one HTV every year through 2015 (*Asahi*, 22 September).

For more on the H-2B and HTV, please see OSC Report: Space Launch Industry Targets Commercial Satellite Business (JPP20090501321001)

Press reports and space industry leaders viewed the successful H-2B launch as positioning Japan for future commercial success.

- Leading business daily *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* (*Nikkei*) reported that the successful debut of the H-2B rocket "ignited hopes for the future of Japan's space industry" and quoted an MHI official as saying that "we're on the cusp of competing with foreign rivals" (15 September).
- Conservative daily *Sankei Shimbun* wrote that with the successful H-2B launch "Japan has taken its first step toward making a full-fledged international contribution to space development" and that H-2B manufacturer MHI expects the rocket to "contribute to bolstering its competitiveness in the satellite-launch business" (12 September).
- MHI President Hideaki Omiya expressed confidence about Japan's future prospects in the commercial launch business, saying that the H-2B's success "will be a big advantage for us in commercialization" (*FujiSankei Business*, 12 September).

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