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Russia Launches Its Most Powerful Telecom Satellite

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SC "Yuzhny" / Roscosmos

Russia has launched a powerful European-made communications satellite for the state energy giant Gazprom from Kazakhstan.

Gazprom's space subsidiary, Gazprom Space Systems, runs Yamal satellites to broadcast to customers in Russia, western and central Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. France's Thales Alenia Space company manufactures the satellites for Gazprom.

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The Yamal-601 satellite launched from Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan and was sent into orbit after a nine-hour flight, Russia's space agency Roscosmos said on Thursday.

Yamal-601 replaces the Yamal-202 satellite, providing new capabilities including satellite broadband and expanded coverage. The satellite is the most powerful communications

satellite in Russia's orbital fleet and has a shelf life of 15 years, Interfax reported.

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Five additional Proton-M rocket launches are planned in 2019. Dogged by a string of failures and quality control concerns in 2006-2015, Protons will be phased out and replaced by Angara rockets over the next decade.

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