The Moscow Times
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Resumes Use of Space Launch Site Damaged in Accident

By AFP

March 22, 2026



The Soyuz-2.1a rocket booster carrying the Progress MS-33 spacecraft is being installed on the launch pad at Baikonur Cosmodrome on March 17, 2026. **Roscosmos Media/TASS**

Russia has launched a rocket from Site 31 of the Baikonur Cosmodrome for the first time since it was damaged during lift-off last November, video from Russia's Roscosmos space agency showed Sunday.

Site 31 was Russia's only operational launch pad for crewed missions to the International Space Station (ISS).

Part of the launch site collapsed during lift-off of Soyuz MS-28 in November last year, temporarily preventing Russia from being able to send cosmonauts into space.

Repairs on the damaged section of the site wrapped up earlier this month, according to Roscosmos.

Video on Sunday showed Russia launching the unmanned Progress MS-33 cargo ship to the ISS from Site 31.

“The flight is normal,” a commentator on Russia's Roscosmos space agency said on the video.

The Baikonur Cosmodrome is located in Kazakhstan, but is being used by Russia under a lease set to last until at least 2050.

Once considered a pioneer in space exploration, Russia's space program has faced numerous setbacks since the fall of the Soviet Union, including the loss of its first lunar lander in almost 50 years in 2023.

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