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*3D render of the MULA satellite. Image courtesy of SSTL, from the **STAMINA4Space Program website** (<https://stamina4space.upd.edu.ph/2021/06/09/next-generation-of-ph-satellites-under-way/>)*

The Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA) aims to complete and launch into space the country's biggest, 130-kilograms, commercial-grade satellite by 2023.

Dubbed as the Multispectral Unit for Land Assessment, or MULA, this Earth Observation satellite will be used in capturing operational-quality-images of approximately 100,000 km² of land area daily as part of government's information gathering on the country's natural resources.

According to Department of Science and Technology (DOST) Secretary Fortunato Dela Peña, the MULA project is being developed by the DOST-funded Advanced Satellite and Know-how Transfer for the Philippines (ASP) Project, and is being implemented by the University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD) and the DOST-Advanced Science and Technology Institute (DOST-ASTI), in coordination with the PhilSA. The satellite is being designed and manufactured together with British company Surrey Space Technology Ltd (SSTL).

MULA's TrueColour camera can capture high resolution images needed for disaster management, land use and land cover change mapping, crop monitoring, and forestry management. The satellite will also be equipped with the Automatic Identification System (AIS) and Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) for ship and aircraft detection and tracking.

"Equipped with the acquired technical know-how and capabilities through our experiences in building DIWATA and MAYA satellites, we are now moving forward with our first operational and industrial quality satellite aimed towards providing a wide range of socio-economic benefits for the country," said PhilSA Deputy Director-General and ASP Project Leader, Dr. Gay Jane Perez, who is also Associate Professor of and Deputy Director for Research and Extension of the UP Diliman Institute of Environmental Science and Meteorology. "With its

capability to capture higher resolution images, we will be able to better monitor terrestrial ecosystems, as well as our land and marine resources to ensure both agricultural productivity and environmental integrity. We will also be able to assess environmental conditions to be more proactive in disaster management and mitigation,” she added.

Dr. Perez said further that while MULA will be the first of the country’s next generation satellites, the project helps Filipinos develop expertise in space science and technologies that cater to the needs of our nation. Since December 2020, more than 30 Filipino engineers have remotely attended a small satellite system design course conducted by SSTL, while nine of them are undergoing full immersion for the design and manufacture process in the UK.

Engr. John Leur Labrador, MULA Project Manager and Electronics and Communications Engineering *cum laude* graduate from UP, added that the spacecraft can be imagined as “a Filipino astronaut tasked to take images of our natural resources while monitoring aircraft and ship activity in our country.”

“We use the satellites to generate images and other data to support evidence-based policies for better governance, leading to productive communities and inclusive development. This is in line with PhilSA’s mission of value addition and creation from space that supports societal benefit and economic development,” concluded Dr. Joel Marciano, Jr., PhilSA Director-General, who is also a faculty member of the UP Electrical and Electronics Engineering Institute.

The Philippine Space Agency was established on August 8, 2019, when Republic Act 11363 or the “Philippine Space Act” was signed into law. PhilSA builds on the foundation created by the development, launch, and operation of Earth Observation microsats Diwata-1 and Diwata-2, and CubeSats Maya-1, Maya-2 and the upcoming Maya satellites under STAMINA4Space (formerly “The Development of Philippine Scientific Earth Observation Microsatellite” or “PHL-Microsat” Program), together with Japanese university partners.

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