

CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



CENJOWS

SPACE COOPERATION – INTERNATIONAL LUNAR SPACE STATION

SPACE

1. **China and Russia plan to build a lunar research station together.**¹ China National Space Administration (CNSA) and Roscosmos, Russia's federal space agency have signed a memorandum of understanding In March this year for the construction of a moon outpost called the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS).
2. Eventually, ILRS would be a scientific experiment base with the capability for long-term autonomous operation. It would be either built on the lunar surface or in the lunar orbit which will facilitate multi-disciplinary and multi-objective scientific research activities such as lunar exploration and utilization, lunar-based observation and basic scientific experiments.
3. As per the Chinese official statement, ILRS would be for a scientific research exchange, with aim to promote exploration and use of outer space for peaceful purposes. It is also intended to open the programme to other interested countries and international partners. The time line of the programme however, has not been announced yet.
4. Chinese progress in space has become cause of concern for NASA, US which is working on the Artemis programme. It relates to carrying out human moon landing by 2024 and eventually US wants to maintain sustained human presence on the moon by end of the decade. Artemis is joint multinational programme. Though NASA disclosed the programme in May this year, actually accord has been signed on 13 October 2020

¹<https://www.space.com/russia-china-moon-research-station-agreement>

by the space agencies of eight countries: the United States, Australia, Canada, Japan, Luxembourg, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates to cooperate in the venture. Recently Brazil too have joined accord. The accord is claimed to be in conformity with Outer Space Treaty (OST) which prohibits claiming sovereignty on the moon or other celestial bodies but, it does not prohibit the mining and selling of resources.

5. Though Chinese and Russian MoU, and US Artemis accord do not clearly state, but in time to come the ownership of moon surface and its resources and subsequently on other celestial bodies could emerge as the cause of acrimony between the competing nations.