

China setting up new rocket production base

March 4 2011



A Long March 3C rocket blasts off from the Chinese launch centre in Sichuan province. China is setting up a new high-tech manufacturing base that will build the rockets for its ambitious space programme to put a man on the moon, state press has said.

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Twenty of the 22 plants that will make up "the world's largest rocket design, production and testing base" have already been completed at the complex in the northern port city of Tianjin, the Global Times said.

China's Long March IV and V rockets will be designed and built at the 200-hectare (500-acre) complex, the paper said, citing Liang Xiaohong,

vice head of the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology.

No timetables were given on when the new-generation rockets would be completed.

But with a payload capacity of 25 tonnes, the Long March V would rival the US Delta 4H rocket, Liang said.

"Long March V rockets are designed for missions following the country's manned space programme and [lunar exploration](#) programme," Liang was cited as saying.

China launched its second [lunar probe](#) on October 1 and hopes to bring a [moon rock](#) sample back to Earth in 2017. It has planned a manned mission to the moon for around 2020, according to state media.

China also hopes to complete a manned space station in around 2016, state press reports have said.

China's first [space docking](#), an essential step toward building a space station, is expected to be carried out later this year when two unmanned, but separately launched, space modules link up while orbiting the Earth.

The nation became only the third in the world to put a man in space independently -- after the United States and Russia -- when Yang Liwei piloted the one-man Shenzhou-5 [space mission](#) in 2003.

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Citation: China setting up new rocket production base (2011, March 4) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-03-china-rocket-production-base.html>

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