

Japan's space agency ends Moon probe operation

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The Smart Lander for Investigating Moon, dubbed the "Moon Sniper" touched down in January making Japan only the fifth nation to achieve a soft lunar landing.

Japan's space agency said on Monday it had ended its Moon lander operation after losing communication with the uncrewed spaceship last week.

The Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM), dubbed the "Moon Sniper" for its landing precision, touched down eight months ago—making Japan only the fifth nation to achieve a soft lunar landing.

The Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) wrote on X there was no response from the SLIM after trying to communicate last week following three frigid lunar nights or six cold weeks.

"We judged that there was no prospect of restoring communication with SLIM, and at around 22:40 (1340 GMT) on August 23, we sent a command to stop the SLIM activity," JAXA said, nearly a year after launching the operation.

"SLIM continued to transmit information on its status and the surrounding environment for a much longer period than expected."

"At the time of launch, no one imagined that the operation would continue this long," it said.

The touchdown of the unmanned [lander](#) in January was a success, but it landed at a wonky angle that left its [solar panels](#) facing the wrong way.

As the sun's angle shifted, it came back to life for two days and carried out scientific observations of a crater with a high-spec camera.

The SLIM was not designed for the freezing, two-week-long lunar nights, when the temperature plunges to minus 133 degrees, but it worked up for a third time in April.

The spacecraft carried two probes, one with a transmitter and a mini-rover that moves like a turtle around the [lunar surface](#) beaming images back to Earth.

The SLIM's mission aims to examine a part of the Moon's mantle—the usually deep inner layer beneath its crust—believed to be accessible at the crater where it landed.

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