

China tests space station module to launch in 2011

17 August 2010

(AP) -- China has finished the first module of a planned space station and is testing its electronics and other systems before launching it into orbit next year.

The official Xinhua News Agency reported on the module's schedule Tuesday. It also said changes were being made on a two-stage Long March 2F rocket that will carry the 8.5 ton Tiangong 1 module into a set orbit.

The Shenzhou 8 spacecraft will dock with it in the second half of 2011, with the Shenzhou 9 and 10 to follow in 2012, Xinhua said.

That [spacecraft](#) is part of China's manned space program, but no dates were given on when the space station would be finished or manned.

China also plans to launch a second [lunar probe](#) in October and an unmanned moon landing in 2012. A possible manned lunar mission has also been proposed for 2017.

[China](#) launched its first manned flight in 2003, joining Russia and the United States as the only countries to launch humans into orbit.

However, habitual secrecy and military links have inhibited cooperation with other nations' space programs - including on the actively manned [International Space Station](#).

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