

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2017/jan/10/indian-french-space-agencies-ink-pact-on-satellite-launch-technology-1557987.html>

Indian, French space agencies ink pact on satellite launch technology

Indian Space Research Organisation and French Space agency (CNES) today signed a partnership agreement in satellite launch technology.

The agreement was signed between ISRO Chairman Kiran Kumar and CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall in the presence of visiting French Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean-Marc Ayrault.

Space cooperation between France and India spans over 50 years and is one of the cornerstones of the Indo-French strategic partnership.

Ayrault, accompanied by the French delegation, was given a guided tour of ISTRAC (ISRO Telemetry Tracking and Command Network) by the ISRO chairman, according to a French Consulate release here.

ISTRAC monitors Indian space missions, including the two Indo-French satellites currently in orbit for collecting data to track climate change.

ISRO is the second partner of CNES, in terms of volume, after NASA. Of comparable size and sharing similar objectives, the space programmes of both countries are complementary, it was noted.

Strengthening the CNES-ISRO partnership will enable France to benefit from the Indian model of streamlining the costs of space programmes.

Later, Ayrault met Rahul Narayan, CEO of leading Indian "NewSpace" start-up, Axiom Research Labs.

This start-up put forward TeamIndus, the only Indian team competing for the Google Lunar XPRIZE, a global competition for engineers and entrepreneurs to develop low-cost methods of robotic space exploration.

USD 20 million will be granted to the first private company that successfully lands a module on the Moon, places a robot that explores at least 500 metres and transmits high-definition videos and images back to Earth.

As TeamIndus races to design an all-terrain rover by end-2017 for this lunar mission, the French Space Agency will provide it with cameras, the release said.

In the presence of the Minister, Narayan and Le Gall signed an agreement for equipping Axiom Research Lab's lunar rover with two latest-generation CASPEX micro-cameras, developed by CNES in partnership with French firm 3DPlus.

In joining forces with Team Indus on this first private mission to land a rover on the moon, CNES is sending French technology for the first time on lunar terrain, the release said.