

India Becomes the 4th Country to Land on the Moon



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Aug 23, 2023 6:31 PM

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Ten years after the USSR Space Program reached the moon with a cosmic rocket called the Luna 2, the United States became the first country to successfully land on the fifth largest satellite in the Solar System when NASA deployed (Apollo 11), a spacecraft occupied by six crew members, including Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin in the Summer of 1969. China entered the "race to space" one year later, sending a satellite into the moon's orbit with the help of the Soviet Union. Subsequently, in the 2010s, China became the third nation to land a rover on the moon and the first to land in the lunar hemisphere, which faces the opposite direction of Earth. On Wednesday, India joined Russia, the United States of America, and China in the historical feat when the Vikram (lander) and the Pragyan (rover) touched down on the moon's surface as a part of a mission called "Chandrayaan-3." After 11 failed attempts to land on the moon since 2013, India is now the first nation to voyage to the South Pole of the Earth's only natural satellite.

According to reports, many scientists in India share a theory that the unexplored South Pole region of the moon may contain a significant amount of frozen water reserves. News of the record-setting operation reached media cycles in India shortly after the landing around 6:04 pm (local time), and it sparked countrywide celebrations from the watch party held by scientists in the city of Bengaluru to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who said the following during a visit to South Africa, "India is now on the moon. India has reached the south pole of the moon; no other country has achieved that. We are witnessing history."

In addition to being celebrated worldwide, India is also being lauded for its low-cost approach to the successful space mission. The Indian Space Research Organization ascertained that the landing cost approximately \$75 million, which is substantially low considering that NASA's budget this year was \$25.4 billion and China spent nearly \$13 billion on space activities in 2022. Nevertheless, Jim Bridenstine, a former NASA administrator, believes there is a clear pathway for India's space program to develop just as efficiently as its predecessors from other countries.

"They should feel very proud of this accomplishment," Bridenstine said. "India should have in its ambitions the desire to invest more and more and develop the capabilities that are more on par with the United States."

Elsewhere around the world, space programs in Latin America (Latin American and Caribbean Space Agency), South Africa (South African National Space Agency), South Korea (Korea Aerospace Administration), and Europe (The European Space Agency) are fair indications that it might not be long before others join the Indian Space Research Organisation in making history.