

## China eyes 2017 moon landing

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**BEIJING, China (Reuters) -- China, which launched its first manned space mission just two years ago, plans to put a man on the moon around 2017 and investigate what may be the perfect source of fuel, a newspaper reported on Friday.**

Two Chinese astronauts orbited Earth for five days last month in the Shenzhou VI and China was now developing new craft up to the Shenzhou X, eyeing a permanent space station and an eventual moon mission, state media said this week.

"China will make a manned moon landing at a proper time, around 2017," leading scientist Ouyang Ziyuan was quoted by the Southern Metropolis News as saying.

The project also includes setting up a moon-based astronomical telescope, measuring the thickness of the moon's soil and the amount of **helium-3** on the moon -- an element some researchers say is a perfect, non-polluting fuel source.

Some scientists believe there is enough helium-3 on the moon to power the world for thousands of years.

"We will provide the most reliable report on helium-3 to mankind," Ouyang said.

The United States unveiled a \$104 billion plan in September to return Americans to the moon by 2018. Its Apollo program carried the first humans to the moon in 1969.

China's first lunar orbiter could blast off as early as 2007, coinciding with its third manned space trip in which possibly three men would orbit Earth in Shenzhou VII and conduct a space walk.

China was designing a rocket that could carry a payload of 25 tons, up from a present limit of eight tons, the Beijing News reported this week, though it would unlikely be ready for another six-and-a-half years.



Chinese astronauts in front of the re-entry capsule of China's second manned spacecraft, Shenzhou 6.