

China to launch space station core module in 2018

China will launch a space station core module in 2018 as the first step in completing the country's first space outpost, according to a senior engineer with China Aerospace Science and Technology Corp. (CASC) on Thursday.

The core module of the space station, named "Tianhe-1" according to previous reports, will be launched on board a new-generation Long March-5 heavyweight carrier rocket, said Bao Weimin, director with CASC and a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

It will be followed by a series of launches for other components of the space station, including two space labs, which will dock with the core module while in space, in the next four years or so, he said, adding that the space station will be completed around 2022.

Assembly of the core module has already been completed and tests are currently under way, said Bao, who is in Beijing for the annual session of China's top political advisory body.

Earlier reports said the new Chinese space station will initially be much smaller than the current International Space Station (ISS), which weighs 420 tonnes, but could be expanded for future scientific research and international cooperation.

With the ISS set to retire in 2024, the Chinese space station will offer a promising alternative, and China will be the only country with a permanent space station.

Bao said the Chinese outpost will function in orbit for "dozens of years," and that it had been specially designed to be able to handle space debris.

"For the big pieces (of space debris), we could conduct evasive maneuvers, and for those measuring less than 10 cm in size, we just take the hit," Bao said, adding that all key parts of the space station will be serviceable and replaceable.

He went on to say that the next five years will see some exciting advances in China's space program.

In particular, the Long March-5 launch missions have been scheduled this year, including one that will take the Chang'e-5 lunar probe to the Moon in November and return with lunar samples.

Long March-5 is a large, two-stage rocket with a payload capacity of 25 tonnes to low-Earth orbit and 14 tonnes to geostationary transfer orbit, the largest of China's carrier rockets. Its carrying capacity is about 2.5 times that of the current main model Long March carrier rockets.

The rocket will also be used in China's planned Mars probes, and possibly future missions to Jupiter and other planets within the solar system, Bao said. Endi

News story: £15 million boost for UK lamb exports

UK lamb will soon be back on dinner plates across Kuwait following a new deal worth up to £15 million, Food Minister George Eustice announced today.

The re-opened trade route was announced during the minister's visit to the Gulf to promote British food and drink and strengthen the UK's trading relationship with this rapidly growing market.

Three major UK suppliers are already set to benefit from the five-year deal – with shipments prepped to leave soon.

The UK exported £625 million worth of food and drink to the region last year, including £80 million of cereal and £22 million of cheese.

Food Minister George Eustice said:

British lamb has a fantastic reputation around the world for its taste and quality and I'm delighted this export success will now be available for diners in Kuwait.

This move to re-open the market for UK-produced lamb is another example of how we are working hard to tap into international markets and build stronger relationships with trading partners around the world.

Total lamb exports from the UK reached £330 million in 2016, up from £300m the previous year, and this latest deal is a further boost to government's commitment to open more international markets.

The trade mission included a visit to Gulfood in Dubai, where cereal brand Mornflake from Cheshire and a mozzarella producer from Durham were among around 100 UK food and drink companies exhibiting at the world's largest annual trade show.

Jean-Pierre Garnier, head of export trade development at the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) said:

We have found for some time a high level of appetite from Kuwaiti

importers and distributors for British lamb and are delighted to be able at last to supply this market.

We are committed to expanding sales of meat and dairy products in the Gulf region and support the Government's export work. Our presence at the important Gulfood exhibition with meat and dairy stands testifies our willingness to grow sales and open new markets.

As part of the minister's visit he witnessed the signing of two Memorandums of Understanding allowing greater collaboration between the UK government and Gulf on projects in aquaculture, fisheries, climate change and marine environments. The first was with the UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment and the second was with the Gulf-wide Regional Organisation for Protection of the Marine Environment.

To find out how to export click [here](#)

You can read the full International Action Plan for Food and Drink on [here](#)

The ban on UK lamb was introduced by Kuwait due to concerns around scrapie – a degenerative disease that affects the nervous systems of sheep and goats. Government vets provided the necessary evidence to allay concerns and demonstrate the world-leading approach we take to protecting animal health in the UK.

[News story: Track workers struck by ballast, Chathill](#)

Track workers struck by ballast thrown from the track bed by a passing train near Chathill, Northumbria, 16 February 2017.

At around 10:10 hrs on 16 February 2017 two track workers were struck by flying ballast. This was thrown from the track bed by a train on which a flexible hose had become detached at one end and was dragging on the ground. Neither track worker suffered significant injury.

We have undertaken a [preliminary examination](#) into the circumstances surrounding this accident. Having assessed the evidence which has been gathered to date, we have decided to publish a [safety digest](#).

The safety digest will shortly be made available on our website.

Conservative Ministers are out of ideas and have no long-term plan to fix the cost of housing crisis – John Healey

John

Healey MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Housing, responding to new figures released today showing that home-ownership has fallen to the lowest rate in 30 years, said:

"These new government figures show yet another fall in the home-ownership rate in England to the lowest rate in more than 30 years. There are now almost 200,000 fewer home-owning households than in 2010 when Conservative Ministers first took charge.

"Meanwhile, the number of people stuck in an insecure and increasingly expensive private rented sector has grown dramatically over the last seven years. Since 2010, the number of households renting privately as ballooned by over a million.

"After seven years of failure on housing, not only has home-ownership fallen, but affordable housebuilding has hit a 24 year low and rough sleeping has more than doubled. The truth is Conservative Ministers are out of ideas and have no long-term plan to fix the cost of housing crisis.

"Theresa

May says she wants a country that works for everyone, so she should back Labour's plans to build thousands more affordable homes to rent and buy, improve rights for renters and end the scandal of rough sleeping."

The CQC's stark warning that our NHS

stands on a 'burning platform' must be at the forefront of the Chancellor's priorities ahead of next week's Budget – Jonathan Ashworth

Jonathan

Ashworth MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Health, commenting on the CQC's State of Hospitals report, said:

"The CQC's stark warning that our NHS stands on a 'burning platform' must be at the forefront of the Chancellor's priorities ahead of next week's Budget.

"Our hardworking and stretched NHS staff cannot be expected to pick up the pieces from this Government's failure to properly fund our NHS and social care system.

"After the worst winter crisis in years, in which nine out of ten hospitals were left dangerously overcrowded, the public expects urgent action to rectify years of damaging Tory neglect."