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Isro arm NSIL inks \$18 mn MoU with Australian govt

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NEW DELHI: The Australian government has signed an \$18-million memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Indian Space Research Organisation's (Isro's) commercial arm NewSpace India Limited (Nsil).

Under the partnership, announced in New Delhi by Australian high commissioner Philip Green on Wednesday, Australian firm Space Machines will launch a satellite inspection and observation payload aboard Isro's Small Satellite Launch

Vehicle (SSLV) in 2026.

Rajat Kulshrestha, co-founder of Space Machines, said the payload will be the biggest Australian satellite launched to date.

S. Somanath, chairman of Isro, said eventual goal is 20-30 SSLV launches a year, based on the expected demand for small satellite launch rockets.

"While Australia has partnerships with multiple nations for space ventures, we are taking our engagement with India to the next level. The partnership will lead to Australian satellites being launched into orbit from Indian soil," Green said at the inaugural keynote at the Indian

ONCE THE BIDDING IS COMPLETED, SSLV WILL BE MANUFACTURED AND OPERATED BY THE PVT SECTOR

Space Congress 2024.

The partnership will involve several stakeholders in India's private space economy including domestic space-engineering firm Ananth Technologies, which has supplied components and engineering services to Isro in many previous missions.

Pawan Goenka, chairman of the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (In-Space), a government-affiliated space promotions agency, confirmed that the SSLV was being privatised and that the bidding process was still ongoing.

Six bidders have been identified, but a final decision is yet to be taken, he said. Once completed, SSLV will be manufactured and operated by the private sector.

Somanath said at the event, "The Indian space economy has a long way to go. While Isro has the LVM-3 as its heaviest rocket,

we need more capacity and capability to be able to reach the lunar orbit and land back on Earth. The next step after building this would be to further increase capacity and land an Indian on the moon, which will happen by 2040. Going forward, the gap between the strategic and civilian space industries is decreasing. This will be of help as our space economies progress."

The conference also saw Isro and the Australian government announce joint space conferences in November for more collaboration between the two space economies.