

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a night sky. A vibrant nebula with shades of purple, pink, and orange stretches across the upper half. In the lower half, a silhouette of a person stands on a dark horizon, looking up at the stars. The overall mood is contemplative and futuristic.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SPACE TOURISM: LEGAL DIMENSIONS

January 29th, 2022

Report of International Conference on
SPACE TOURISM: LEGAL DIMENSIONS

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Carrying forward from the success of three international events of 2021, the Centre for Aviation and Space Laws (CASL), West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences, Kolkata has organized an international conference on the theme of “Space Tourism: Legal Dimensions” on 29 January 2022. The CASL carries the mandate of exploring, analysing and critically evaluating the legal developments in the aviation, space and allied industries to lead the way forward. The conference marked the participation of esteemed resource persons from different corners of the world, academicians, scholars, space law practitioners as well as students. The goals of the conference were to initiate pertinent discussions in the domain of space tourism and its legal implications across the globe and to find solutions to various challenges like safety and security in space, status of space tourists during emergency, liability aspects, environmental protection etc. faced during the recent spurt of space tourism.

The conference started with a welcome address delivered by the Hon’ble Vice-Chancellor of NUJS, Kolkata, Prof. (Dr.) N.K. Chakrabarti. This was followed by the keynote address delivered by Prof. (Dr.) Ram Jakhu, Professor and Acting Director of Institute of Air and Space Law, McGill University, Montreal, Canada. His focus on the area of rule of law and capacity-building in space has been a perfect start for a discourse on space tourism. Prof. (Dr.) Sandeepa Bhat B. then proceeded to deliver the inaugural address wherein he discussed the various legal concerns in space tourism with profound depth. Subsequently, Prof. Bruce K. Gagnon, the Coordinator, Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, USA ended this session by deliberating on the dangers of privatization of space.

Following the inaugural session, Prof. (Dr.) Melissa de Zwart, Professor of Aviation Law & Professor (Digital Technology, Security & Governance), Jeff Bleich Centre for the US Alliance in Digital Technology, Security & Governance, and Deputy Chair of the Space Industry Association of Australia, spoke on the concept of “Astronaut” under international law especially

in the context of changes brought by space tourism during the first technical session. Dr. Jennifer Brobst, Associate Professor at Southern Illinois University School of Law, spoke after this in an engaging effort to emphasise the need for preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of space. This session also had three paper presentations. Dr. Shouvik Kumar Guha, Assistant Professor & Associate Director of CASL presented on the Kármán Line controversy especially in light of space tourism. Ankit Kumar Padhy and Dr. Divya Tyagi followed him with an insightful presentation on the rescue norms for private space tourists in case of emergency. The last presentation of this session was by Rohan Pillai and Arshi Alam highlighting the effects of space tourism and the need for insurance in space tourism.

The second technical session started with a presentation by Prof. (Dr.) Karl Grossman, Professor of Journalism, State University of New York/College at Old Westbury, USA. He spoke at length on the area of negative impacts of space militarization on space tourism. After Prof. Grossman, Prof. (Dr.) G.S. Sachdeva, Adjunct Professor at NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, highlighted the various crimes possible in outer space with the rise of space tourism and the mechanisms for adjudication of such crimes. He provided a detailed layout of the principles which should necessarily be used while adjudicating crimes in outer space. The three paper presentations in this technical session were from the faculty members and researchers from three distinguished law schools of India. Dr. Asha P. Soman in her paper discussed on the legal framework of liability in space tourism, especially in the context of interplay between the State and the private space players. This was followed by Aaditya Vikram Sharma's presentation on the extension of Antarctic experience to space tourism, and subsequently, Anish Dey's discourse on importing both aviation and Antarctic experiences in dealing with space tourism.

The third and final technical session commenced with the presentation by Prof. (Dr.) Dave Webb, the Convenor of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. He provided his insightful thoughts on the environmental impacts of space tourism. This was followed by the presentation of another resource person, Dr. Martha Mejía-Kaiser, Member of the Board of Directors of the International Institute of Space Law (IISL). Dr. Martha highlighted various pertinent reasons for keeping outer space safe for human presence. This session had two paper presentations. The first paper was presented by Joseph S. Raju who deliberated on developing space tourism in a sustainable way by addressing environmental

concerns. The last paper was presented by Kavya Salim on the aspect of quarantining space tourists especially to avoid the possibility of biological contamination of the Earth.

Thus, each presentation in this conference had been unique, and helped every participant to gain an in-depth insight into various facets of space tourism, especially from the legal point of view. Every session had a dedicated question and answer session spanning twenty minutes each, which was found to be very engaging and productive with participants raising quality questions and the expert resource persons responding to them. Overall, the conference was extremely successful in reaching and involving various stakeholders. The thoughts presented and issues addressed in the conference helped in providing a wider spectrum to deliberate on the legal dimensions of space tourism, and the resulting scholarship would certainly make a rich contribution to the existing literature and policy-framing across jurisdictions.