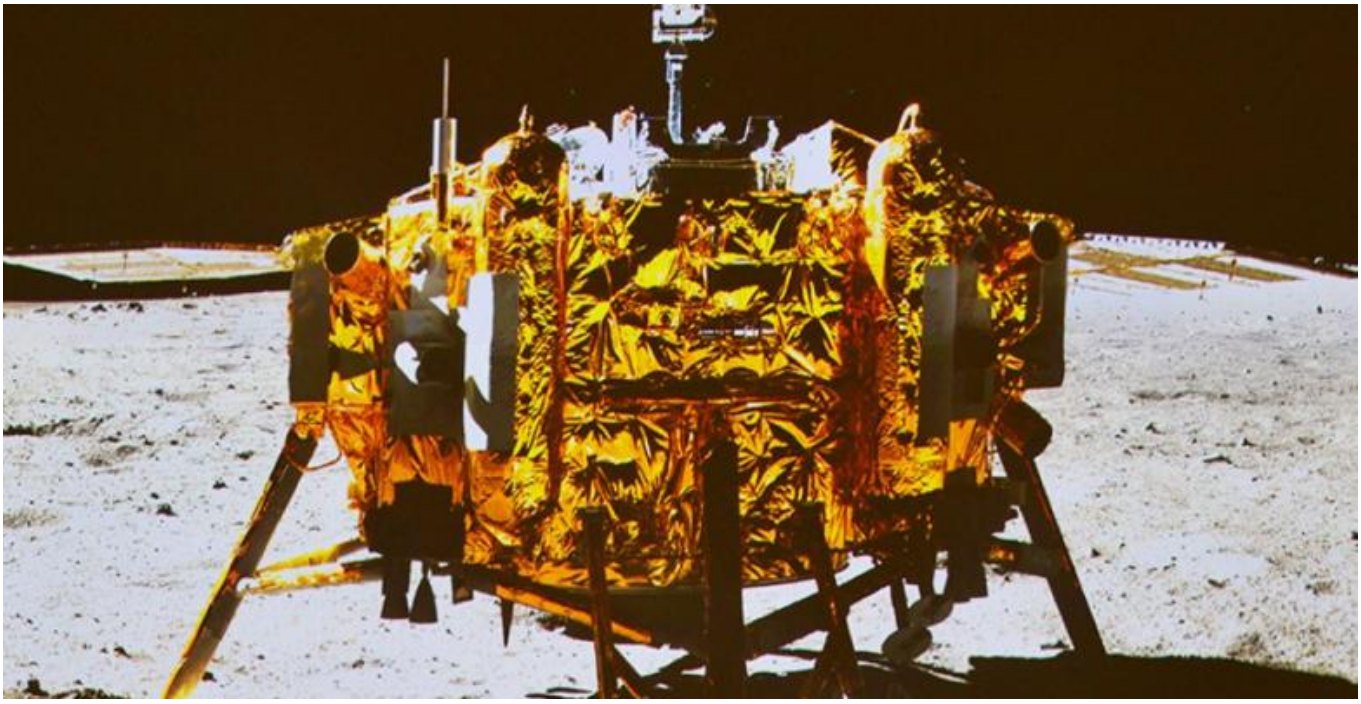
China aims to be first to land on dark side of moon

15/01/2016



China is going to send the Chang'e-4 probe to the dark side of the moon in 2018, according to China's State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND), Xinhua news agency reports.
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*"The Chang'e-4's lander and rover will make a soft landing on the back side of the moon, and will carry out in-place and patrolling surveys,"* Liu Jizhong, the Chinese lunar exploration chief, said on Thursday, as cited by the

Guardian.

He added that the spacecraft would explore geological conditions on the dark side, which is never visible to the Earth because of gravitational forces and is, therefore, poorly explored.

Liu also said that it will be the first landing mission to the far side of the moon, pointing out that China's science and technologies are advanced enough to accomplish it on their own. He also said that the country is open to cooperation with the international community.

The lunar exploration chief added that the Chang'e-4 is very similar to China's previous spacecraft, Chang'e-3, but can carry a bigger payload.
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China gave the green light to its ambitious Lunar Exploration Program in 2004 and launched its first space craft, Chang'e-1, to the Moon in 2007.

On December 14, 2013, Chang'e-3 became the first Chinese spacecraft to land on the moon. It delivered an unmanned lunar rover, Yutu (Jade Rabbit) to the lunar surface, which became the first rover operated on the moon since the Soviet Lunokhod-2 that ceased operations in 1973.

Despite all of those achievements, up until now, China has only been replicating the previous achievements of the US and the USSR. The landing on the dark side of the moon, however, will be China's first ever pioneer mission in space.

*"The implementation of the Chang'e-4 mission has helped our country make the leap from following to leading in the field of lunar exploration,"* Liu said, the Guardian reports.