

# China schedules Chang'e-5 lunar probe launch

China plans to launch the Chang'e-5 lunar probe at the end of November this year, from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in southern China's Hainan Province, aboard the heavy-lift carrier rocket Long March-5.

The mission will be China's first automated moon surface sampling, first moon take-off, first unmanned docking in a lunar orbit about 380,000 km from earth, and first return flight in a speed close to second cosmic velocity, according to the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation (CASC).

"With a weight of 8.2 tonnes, the lunar probe is comprised of four parts: an orbiter, a returner, an ascender and a lander," said Ye Peijian, one of China's leading aerospace experts and a consultant to the program.

The lander will put moon samples in a vessel in the ascender after the moon landing. Then the ascender will take off from the moon to dock with the orbiter and the returner orbiting the moon, and transfer the samples to the returner.

The orbiter and returner then head back to the earth, separating from each other when they are several thousands kilometers from earth. Finally, the returner will reenter the earth.

The development of Chang'e-5 has entered the end of its flight model phase, and relevant work is proceeding smoothly, according to CASC.

China plans to fulfill three strategic steps with the launch of Chang'e-5, "orbiting, landing and returning."

The country also plans to launch the Chang'e-4 lunar probe around 2018 to achieve mankind's first soft landing on the far side of the moon, and to conduct an in situ and roving detection and relay communications at earth-moon L2 point, according to the China National Space Administration.

"The country plans to send robots to explore both lunar poles," said the administration's vice director Wu Yanhua late last year, adding that plans to send astronauts to the moon were also being discussed.

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## Visit to Forest School

I visited Forest School at the request of the Headteacher on Friday. I was shown the buildings, met the Head Boy and Deputy Head Boy, and discussed a

wide range of issues about the success of the school and its future prospects. I explained that I had campaigned in the last Parliament for fairer funding for schools, as places like Wokingham have done poorly out of the grant formula in recent years. The government was elected on a promise to reform the grant allocations. The Secretary of State announced new proposals for 2018-19. I am pressing her to go further, as the gap between what we receive and what the best paid schools receive is still very large.

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## **It is completely unacceptable that the Prime Minister chose to side-step questions on the Trident test – Griffith**

**Nia Griffith MP, Labour's**

**Shadow Defence Secretary**, commenting on the Prime Minister's failure to explain when she knew about the Trident test blunder, said:

"This report of a Trident missile veering off course during a test is clearly a very serious matter indeed, and we need to know exactly what happened."

"Furthermore, it is completely unacceptable that today the Prime Minister chose to side-step questions on the test, and would not even tell us when she knew about the incident.

"I am demanding the Prime Minister come to Parliament tomorrow to give a full explanation to MPs."

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## **China makes progress in fight against desertification**

China will step up efforts to fight desertification to meet a global target of halting net land degradation by 2030, a senior official said Sunday.

The country plans to rehabilitate more than 11,300 square kilometers of

severely desertified farmland in the next three years at a cost of at least 27.2 billion yuan (about 4 billion U.S. dollars), Zhang Yongli, deputy head of State Forestry Administration, said at a press conference.

Zhang said China will enhance vegetation protection on desert land and improve compensation mechanisms to reward localities working toward fighting desertification.

China will also strengthen international cooperation, especially with countries along the Belt and Road, to reverse desertification, Zhang said.

Expanding deserts are a global challenge. It is estimated that one-third of the earth is exposed to desertification, affecting millions of people.

China has spent decades curbing desertification through greening. It has effectively contained desertification, with desertified land area shrinking continuously during the past decade.

The area of its desertified land totaled 1.72 million square kilometers at the end of 2014, nearly one fifth of the country, down 9,900 square kilometers from 2009.

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## Xi to head central commission for integrated military, civilian development

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, will head a new central commission for integrated military and civilian development, according to a decision by the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee on Sunday.

The decision was made at a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, which was chaired by Xi.

The commission will be the central agency tasked with decision-making, deliberation and coordination of major issues regarding integrated military and civilian development.

The commission will report to the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee.

Attendees at the meeting also heard a report on the work of leading Party groups of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), the State Council, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC)

National Committee, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee.

In a statement released after the meeting, the political bureau called for efforts to uphold the authority of the CPC Central Committee with comrade Xi Jinping as the core, adhere to its centralized and unified leadership, and fully implement major policies of the committee.

The year ahead is an important year to implement the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) and supply-side structural reform.

The top leadership called on the leading Party groups of the NPC Standing Committee, the State Council, the CPPCC National Committee, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate to follow new development concepts, fulfil their responsibility for strict governance of the Party, promote stable and healthy development of the economy and social stability and harmony.

Attendees urged the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee to make policies to serve the overall situation, improve its working system and capability to solve practical problems so as to complete tasks given by the CPC Central Committee.