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# China launches satellite to explore dark side of moon

The Chang'e-4 mission aims to provide a means of communications for setting down and operating a lunar lander and rover on the far side of the moon

AFP | Beijing

China launched yesterday a relay satellite that will allow a rover to communicate with the Earth from the far side of the Moon during an unprecedented mission later this year.

The Queqiao ("Magpie Bridge") satellite was blasted into space from the southwestern Xichang launch centre in the pre-dawn hours, according to the China National Space Administration.

The satellite split from its carrier, a Long March-4C rocket, after 25 minutes and unfolded its solar panels and communication antennas, as it headed towards its destination, the CNSA said.

"The launch is a key step for China to realise its goal of being the first country to send a probe to soft-land on and rove the far side of the Moon," Zhang Lihua, manager of the relay satellite project, was quoted as saying by the official *Xinhua* news agency.

The satellite will relay communications between controllers on Earth and the far side of the moon, where the Chang'e-4 lunar probe -- named after the moon goddess in Chinese mythology -- will be sent later this year.

Also known as the "dark side" of the Moon, the far hemisphere



The Queqiao 'Magpie Bridge' satellite was blasted into space from the southwestern Xichang launch centre

is never directly visible from Earth and while it has been photographed, with the first images appearing in 1959, it has never been explored.

The satellite is equipped with a payload for a space sensory system developed by Saudi engineers and researchers for filming and taking photos of the moon.

The Chang'e-4 rover will be sent to the Aitken Basin in the lunar south pole region, according to *Xinhua*.

It will be the second Chinese



The launch includes an optical camera developed by Saudi Arabia

probe to land on the Moon, following the Yutu ("Jade Rabbit") rover mission in 2013.

At first, the Yutu looked destined to fail when the rover stopped sending signals back to Earth.

But then it made a dramatic recovery, ultimately surveying the Moon's surface for 31 months, well beyond its expected lifespan.

The CNSA is planning to send another lunar rover, Chang'e-5, next year to collect samples and bring them back to Earth.

## Saudi destroy ballistic missile

Arab News | Dubai

Saudi Arabia's air defence forces intercepted a ballistic missile launched by the Iran-backed Houthi militia targeting Jazan early yesterday morning, Saudi state-news agency SPA reported.

The Arab coalition's spokesperson, Col. Turki Al-Maliki, said no civilians were reported injured by the rocket fragments scattered across residential areas.

This is not the first incident where the Houthis have targeted civilian areas in Saudi

Arabia, last week the air defence forces intercepted another missile aiming at Jazan

"Such hostile and random acts carried out by the Houthi militia prove the continued involvement of the Iranian regime in the Yemeni war," Al-Maliki said at the time.

"Iran has been, and still is, supporting the armed militia by providing them with qualitative capabilities. This support comes as a clear and explicit defiance of UN Resolutions in order to threaten the Kingdom and regional and global security," he added.

## Six pygmy elephants found dead in Malaysia



An orphaned pygmy elephant

AFP | Kuala Lumpur

Six Borneo pygmy elephants have been found dead in Malaysian palm oil plantations in recent weeks, officials said yesterday, the latest of the endangered creatures to perish as their rainforest habitat is devastated.

The carcasses of the elephants, aged between one and 37, were discovered at differ-

ent locations in Sabah state on Borneo island, local wildlife department director Augustine Tuuga said.

"We are currently conducting tests on their internal organs," he said, adding the carcasses did not have any signs of gunshot wounds.

Tuuga said the elephants could have accidentally consumed fertiliser in the palm oil plantations, which could have poisoned them.

The *Star* newspaper, citing conservationists, said the creatures might have drunk from poisoned watering holes.

There are about 2,000 pygmy elephants, the smallest type of elephant in Asia, in the wild. Late last year three were killed by poachers.

In 2013 14 pygmy elephants were found dead in Sabah and were thought to have been poisoned.

## Paraguay opens embassy in Jerusalem

Reuters | Jerusalem

Paraguay opened its Israel embassy in Jerusalem yesterday, the second country to follow the United States in making the politically sensitive move from Tel Aviv.

Paraguayan President Horacio Cartes and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attended the inauguration ceremony. The United States relocated its embassy to Jerusalem a week ago, drawing Palestinian anger. It was followed by Guatemala on Wednesday.

The status of Jerusalem is one of the thorniest obstacles to forging a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians, who with broad international backing want East Jerusalem, captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war, as

their capital.

Israel regards all of the city, including the eastern sector it annexed after the 1967 conflict, as its capital.

"This is a historic day that strengthens ties between Paraguay and Israel," Cartes said at the ceremony.

"A great day for Israel. A great day for Paraguay. A great day for our friendship," Netanyahu responded. "You have not only the support of our government but the profound gratitude of the people Israel."

Hanan Ashrawi, an official of the Palestine Liberation Organization, denounced Paraguay's move.

In December, US President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, upsetting the Arab world and Western allies.

## Flames engulf Saudi Arabia, UAE border checkpoint

Al Arabiya | Riyadh

A massive fire broke out at the al-Batha border checkpoint, on the border of UAE and Saudi Arabia on Sunday afternoon. Abu Dhabi civil defense officials rushed to help their Saudi counter-parts and were successful in putting out the fire, according to Gulf News.

Various flammable materials were quickly moved away from the scene and the public was cordoned off at a safe distance.

"This is a direct outcome of the readiness trainings they conduct on a regular basis to hone their skills and boost their capabilities," al-Rumaihi, the Chairman of Abu Dhabi emergency, crisis and disasters man-



Thick black smoke rises from the fire at the border checkpoint

agement team told the newspaper.

"Supporting our brothers in emergencies that threaten their safety and stability is part of the measures we take to safeguard our security and national stability," he added.

A video of the incident quickly started making rounds across various social media platforms. In the video, multiple firemen are seen trying to douse the fire with water hoses.

Multiple trucks, imported cars and goods were engulfed by the flames, but no commercial movements were affected due to this fire.

The fire broke out at a checkpoint warehouse but the cause still remains to be unknown.