

China's Jade Rabbit lunar rover 'dead' (Update)

February 12 2014



This screen grab taken from CCTV footage shows a photo of the Jade Rabbit moon rover taken by the Chang'e-3 probe lander on December 15, 2013

China's troubled Jade Rabbit lunar rover has died on the surface of the moon, state media reported Wednesday, in a major setback for the country's ambitious space programme just weeks after its much-celebrated soft landing.

The country's first moon rover "could not be restored to full function on Monday as expected", the state-run China News Service said in a brief

report, after the landmark mission suffered a mechanical malfunction last month.

UPDATE: [China's Jade Rabbit rover comes 'back to life', officials say](#)

The Jade Rabbit, or Yutu in Chinese, was deployed on the moon's surface on December 15 after the first lunar soft landing in nearly four decades and was seen as a symbol of China's rising global stature and technological advancement.

China is only the third country to complete a lunar rover mission after the United States and the former Soviet Union and the landing was a key step forward in Beijing's ambitious military-run space programme.

The silver rover experienced a "mechanical control abnormality" late January due to "the complicated lunar surface environment", according to the official Xinhua news agency, and was reportedly unable to function since then.

The rover—named Jade Rabbit after the pet of Chang'e, the goddess of the moon in Chinese mythology—was designed to spend about three months exploring for natural resources on the moon.

Condolences poured in on Weibo, China's hugely-popular Twitter-like service, China News Service said in its brief report titled "Loss of lunar rover".

Chinese state-run media have hailed the mission as a technological triumph and a symbol of national pride while millions across the country have been charting the rover's accomplishments.

The news of its landing—the first of its kind since the former Soviet Union's mission in 1976—topped the list of searched items on popular

Internet message boards.

And when state media broke the news of its troubles last month, web users flooded social media networks with condolence messages.

Giant leap

The Jade Rabbit rover had sent back its first pictures from the moon hours after it was deployed, as officials lauded the soft landing as a giant leap for "mankind as a whole".

The colour images showing the Chinese national flag on the rover were transmitted live to the Beijing Aerospace Control Center, where President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang watched the broadcast.

Images released by Xinhua also showed the lander, covered in golden foil, standing in the Sinus Iridum or Bay of Rainbows, its solar panels open to generate power.

The lunar mission came a decade after China first sent an astronaut into space and was seen as a symbol of the ruling Communist Party's success in reversing the fortunes of the once-impoverished nation.

"Exploration of outer space is an unremitting pursuit of mankind," China's space agency, the State Administration of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence (SASTIND), said after the rover was deployed.

The mission reflects "the new glory of China to scale the peaks in world science and technology areas," it said.

The potential to extract the moon's resources has been touted as a key reason behind Beijing's space programme, with the moon believed to

hold uranium, titanium, and other mineral resources, as well as offering the possibility of solar power generation.

But the phenomenal cost of missions means such projects are not economically viable, experts say.

Beijing plans to establish a permanent space station by 2020 and eventually send a human to the moon.

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Citation: China's Jade Rabbit lunar rover 'dead' (Update) (2014, February 12) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-02-china-jade-rabbit-lunar-rover.html>

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