## CHINA'S LUNAR PROBE SEES FIRST COTTON SEED SPROUT ON MOON

Relevant for: Science & Technology | Topic: Space Technology & related matters

This handout photograph taken on January 7, 2019 and received from Chongqing University on January 15 shows a cotton sprout growing in an "earth chamber" during an experiment inside the Chang'e-4 moon probe on the far side of the moon. Cotton seeds carried by China's Chang'e-4 lunar lander have germinated inside the probe on the far side of the moon, becoming the first shoots to grow on Earth's natural satellite, a scientist on the project said on January 15. Photo Credit: <u>AFP PHOTO / CHONGQING UNIVERSITY</u>

A cotton seed carried to the Moon by China's recent Chang'e-4 probe has sprouted, the first for any biological matter to grow on the Moon.

Images sent back by the probe showed that a cotton sprout had grown well, though no other plant was found growing, the *Xinhua* news agency reported.

On January 3, China's robotic spacecraft Chang'e-4 landed on the far side of the moon, a first in the human history of space exploration.

The 1.3-tonne lander, which made a soft landing on the Moon, carried the seeds of cotton, oilseed rape, potato and arabidopsis, as well as eggs of the fruit fly and some yeast, to form a simple mini biosphere, according to a team led by scientists from Chongqing University in southwest China.

Plants have been grown on the International Space Station before but never on the Moon.

The ability to grow plants on the Moon will be integral for long-term space missions, like a trip to Mars which would take about two-and-a-half years.

It would mean that astronauts could potentially harvest their own food in space, reducing the need to come back down to Earth to re-supply, the *BBC* reported.

The plants are kept in a sealed container on board the Chang'e-4 lander. The crops will try to form a mini biosphere — an artificial, self-sustaining environment.

The lunar mini biosphere experiment on the lander is designed to test photosynthesis and respiration — processes in living organisms that result in the production of energy.

The whole experiment is contained within an 18 cm tall, 3 kg canister that was designed by 28 Chinese universities, the *BBC* said.

China's Chang'e-4 lunar rover scripted history on January 3 when it made the first-ever soft landing on the far side of the moon and sent back

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