

China's satellite to explore Moon's dark side successfully brakes for entry into orbit

In this photo provided by China's official Xinhua News Agency, a Long March-4C rocket carrying a relay satellite, named Queqiao (Magpie Bridge), is launched from southwest China's Xichang Satellite Launch Centre on May 21, 2018. | Photo Credit: [AP](#)

China's relay satellite, on an ambitious lunar exploration mission, has successfully braked near the Moon, completing a vital step before entering a desired orbit, space officials said on Saturday.

Queqiao, the 400-kg satellite which has a designed life of three years, was launched on Monday to enable a rover to communicate with the Earth from the Moon's mysterious far side, as part of the Communist giant's ambitious goal of being the first country to send such a probe.

It braked 100 km above the surface of the Moon in line with instructions from a ground control centre in Beijing, and then entered a transfer orbit from the moon to the second Lagrangian (L2) point of the Earth-Moon system, the China National Space Administration said.

"There was only a short window for the braking. And Queqiao had only one chance due to limited fuel," Zhang Lihua, project manager of the mission was quoted by state-run *Xinhua* news agency as saying.

The relay satellite was launched on Monday to set up a communication link between the Earth and the planned Chang'e-4 lunar probe that will explore the Moon's mysterious far side.

The satellite is expected to adjust orbit several times before it reaches a halo orbit around the L2 point, about 455,000 km from the Earth.

It will be the world's first communication satellite operating in that orbit, the report said.

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