



China completes 3D moon map: state media

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China has completed a high-resolution, three-dimensional map of the entire surface of the moon, state media says.

After putting its first man into space in 2003 - only the third nation to do so - China is aiming to launch an unmanned rover on the moon's surface by 2012 and a manned mission to the moon by around 2020.

The map was made using image data obtained by a camera on China's first lunar probe - the Chang'e 1 - launched in October 2007, the official Xinhua news agency said late on Monday.

Quoting Liu Xianlin, an academic at the Chinese Academy of Surveying and Mapping, the report said the map would help scientists study the features of the moon's surface and deepen understanding of lunar geology and its evolution.

Chen Yongqi, a professor in the department of land surveying and geo-informatics at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, said the map was an important step towards a future lunar landing.

"It is an important stage for the later lunar landing, a selection of the landing site, and to better understand the lunar structure," he said.

"Another objective is to understand the soil of the lunar surface and mineral distribution."

China is one of only a few countries including the United States, Russia, Japan and India to have undertaken a mapping of the moon, according to Chen.