

# Riding an asteroid: China's next goal in space

[unable to retrieve full-text content]After sending a probe to Mars in 2020, China plans to explore three asteroids and land on one of them to conduct scientific research, according to a Chinese asteroid research expert.

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# Regulation revamp urged after student sex attacks

Experts and academics are calling for greater policing of schools and for regulations to be drafted to prevent abuse, after claims that teachers in Beijing and Shanghai sexually assaulted students during periods of private tuition.

The attacks attracted widespread public attention and triggered debate about how parents, schools and society in general should protect children.

In January, a junior middle school teacher in Beijing was detained on suspicion of sexually assaulting a 17-year-old female student. The teacher, who previously taught the student math at school, was hired by the family in September 2015 to provide private tuition.

The student claims that the first assault occurred in April last year, followed by more attacks in July, August and December. The teacher is also alleged to have intimidated the student to prevent her from telling anyone about the incidents.

In December, the teacher was caught sexually assaulting the student by a surveillance camera the father had installed at his daughter's insistence. Once he had seen the footage, the father reported the matter to the police, who are investigating the allegations.

The teacher, who charged 700 yuan (\$102) for each hour's tuition, had been paid more than 160,000 yuan during the previous 14 months.

"If I hadn't seen it myself, I wouldn't have believed that a teacher from a well-known school could have done this," said the girl's father, quoted by The Mirror.

In a similar incident, a teacher at a private junior middle school in Shanghai was sentenced to two and a half years in prison for sexually assaulting and intimidating a female junior school student during private

tuition sessions at his home.

There are no official statistics about teacher-student abuse, but in 2015, the Supreme People's Court told media in Gansu province that the nation's courts heard 7,145 cases of child sexual abuse between 2012 and 2014.

### **Inadequate protection**

Xi Xiaohua, executive director of the Beijing Youth Social Work Research Institute, which is affiliated to the Capital Normal University, said the fact that the incidents happened in large cities was "shocking" and "harrowing". However, she said the parents of the girl in the Beijing incident should bear some of the blame because they left their daughter alone with an adult male.

Yao Jianlong, a professor of law and the director of the school of criminal justice at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, agreed with Xi's stance.

"The absence of a parent or guardian is especially dangerous for children, which explains why more sexual assaults on students are found among 'left-behind' children," he said, referring to children whose parents have moved from their hometown in search of work in cities and towns, leaving the children at home.

In the Beijing incident, Yao said the father, who believed the teacher he had hired at great cost was above suspicion, had been unable to identify the potential threat to the child's safety.

The consequence was that when his daughter told him she no longer wanted to be tutored by the teacher, instead of questioning the man, the father thought the fault lay with his daughter. The father's failure to act left the girl open to more abuse, according to Yao, who conducts research into the sexual assault of children by adults.

"Parents should never leave young children alone with adults. They should be cautious all the time to ensure that there are no blind spots in the guardianship of children—boys or girls," he said, adding that boys are also vulnerable to sexual assault.

Xi said children should learn about the dangers of sexual assault and learn techniques to avoid possible threats.

"Our center has provided a lot of self-protection courses for children at schools and communities in Beijing. We explain to the children what constitutes sexual assault, the signs to look for, and how to deal with it," said Xi, who has spent many years working to raise awareness of the problem among parents and children.

She and her colleagues have long advocated the inclusion of such courses in the school curriculum, but they are a low priority in China's exam-oriented education system: "Under such circumstances, the onus is on the parents to teach their children how to protect themselves."

That's easier said than done, according to Yao. "Chinese parents, including some well-educated people like myself, are too shy to talk about these things. Even when sometimes I want to talk to my son about this, I don't know how to open the conversation. This situation also needs to change," he said.

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## Major research study has the potential to transform the health of the nation

The largest research study of its kind ever to have been undertaken in Wales, HealthWise Wales hopes to recruit 260,000 people aged 16 and older. People who volunteer to take part in the project are asked a series of questions which will help researchers to better understand the health of the people of Wales. The information collected will also be used to help the NHS plan for the future.

Minister Rebecca Evans said:

"The research can help us understand how to find better treatments, improve health and social services, and increase the health and wellbeing of the people of Wales. The more people who get involved, the more powerful the results will be so I encourage everybody across Wales to take part."

The Minister was speaking as new TV, radio, train and newspaper adverts are rolled out across Wales today. The adverts feature real Welsh people who have signed up and are encouraging others to do the same.

Helen O'Sullivan from Wrexham registered to help others overcome illness, Warwick Leek from Rhondda Cynon Taf signed up to help raise awareness of mental health issues, while Sara Crowley from Aberdare volunteered to take part to help improve treatments for diabetes.

Helen, who has experience of cancer, said:

"I read about HealthWise Wales online and, for me, it's about trying to inspire other people. I feel so lucky, and have received great care from the NHS. I registered because I wanted to pro-actively help other women deal with their health issues."

Professor Shantini Paranjothy from Cardiff University, Scientific Lead for the project, said:

“I am delighted to lead this project which has great potential to increase the public’s understanding and involvement in health and social care research in Wales. Everyone living in Wales aged 16 and over can get involved with HealthWise Wales. I’ve signed up because I wanted to contribute my information to make a difference to the population’s health and wellbeing.”

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## [Press release: Prime Minister hosts reception in Downing Street to celebrate St David’s Day](#)

Prime Minister Theresa May is hosting a reception to celebrate St David’s Day in Downing Street today where she will welcome guests from the worlds of business, media, tourism, sport and the charity sector.

A number of companies will be showcasing their products at the event including Welsh whisky, beer and wine as well as cheese from Snowdonia and Welsh cakes. There will also be a performance from the Welsh choir, Côr Heol y March.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

I am pleased to be celebrating St David’s Day with a reception in Downing Street.

Our precious Union is at the heart of everything my government does, which is why [Wales was one of the first places I visited](#) when I became Prime Minister.

And, today, as the Welsh flag flies high alongside the Union flag over Downing Street, we are reminded of the huge part Wales has played in our history and the crucial role it will play in the future prosperity of the UK.

I wish you all a very happy St David’s Day.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

Today, we have a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our national day amongst the people making their indelible mark in their communities, their country, and across the world.

From our brave service men and women to our great figures from the arts, business, culture and sport, these are the people helping to make Wales' future as glorious as its rich and illustrious history.

I send my warmest wishes to everyone celebrating St David's Day at home and around the world.

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## **Press release: Trade Union Act measures come into force to protect people from undemocratic industrial action**

Measures coming into force today (1 March 2017) will protect millions of people from the effects of undemocratic strike action

- Tougher ballot thresholds will reduce industrial action in important public services like transport, health and education by 35%
- 1.5 million working hours a year will be saved from strike action
- Measures will provide a £100 million boost to UK economy over 10 years

Trade Union Act measures come into force today (1 March 2017) to protect millions of people from the effects of undemocratic strike action.

The Act will ensure that if strikes do go ahead it will only be as a result of a clear democratic decision from union members thanks to the introduction of tougher ballot thresholds.

From today, fresh ballots will have to achieve at least a 50% turnout of eligible union members, with a majority voting in favour of strike action. In important public services – including in the health, education and transport sectors – an additional threshold of 40% of support from all eligible members must be met for action to be legal.

The Act will also:

- reduce strikes in important public services by 35%

- prevent more than 1.5 million working hours a year from being lost to strike action
- boost the economy by £10 million a year

**Business Minister Margot James said:**

“The public has a right to be protected from unsupported disruption being caused by a small proportion of union members and that’s exactly what the Trade Union Act will do.”

From 1 March, the Act will also require unions to:

- give employers a minimum of 14 days’ notice before industrial action rather than the previous seven days
- set a six-month time limit – which can be increased to nine months if the union and employer agree – for industrial action so that mandates are always recent
- provide a clearer description of the trade dispute and the planned industrial action on the ballot paper, so that all union members know what they are voting for
- provide more detailed information to union members about ballot results, including how many union members were entitled to vote and whether the relevant thresholds have been met
- report more detailed information on industrial action, ballot results and expenditure of political funds to the Certification Officer, the unions’ regulator, which will then be made public
- ensure supervision of picket lines to ensure they are peaceful
- implement an opt-in system for new members on contributing to political funds within 12 months

**Notes to editors**

1. From today, unions have until 1 March 2018 to ensure all new members joining will have to make an active choice to opt into their union’s political fund. Previously new members would have to opt out of contributing to a union’s political fund.

2. The [Codes of Practice on Picketing](#) and [Industrial Action Ballots and Information to Employers](#) have been updated to reflect these legal changes and come into effect on 1 March 2017.
  
3. The Trade Union Act also introduces new measures in relation to the Certification Officer who will be given new enforcement powers, a financial penalties scheme, and a cost-recovery levy scheme. The Government will consult on proposals for the financial penalties and levy schemes in due course.
  
4. Sir Ken Knight will today begin gathering evidence for his independent review of electronic balloting for industrial disputes