

# Leicester University astrophysicist hopes the Chinese will share samples from the moon's far side with world scientists

SHARJAH, EMIRATE OF SHARJAH,  
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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Leon Barkho,  
University of Sharjah

China's landing on the far side of the moon has made history. It did not only send back stunning videos and images of the side of the moon the humanity never gets to see from earth, but also returned with a cache of samples from this rocky, dark, and mysterious far side of the lunar hemisphere.

Now scientists wonder whether the Chinese would be prepared to share the lunar samples their Chang'e-6 mission has brought back to earth.

"I hope that they're going to be willing to share those samples more widely so that all scientists around the world can get to examine," said Prof. Martin Barstow, University of Leicester's Professor of Astrophysics and Space Science.

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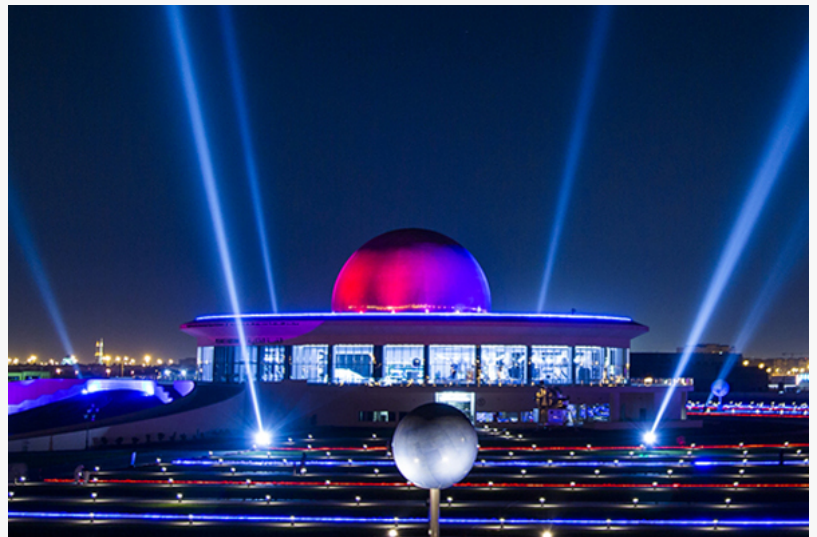
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*Prof. Martin Barstow*

"But I wouldn't blame them if they wanted to keep (them for) themselves for a while so that they can do the first analysis and publish the results before they share them. So, we'll have to wait and see."

The University of Leicester has a program working on the return of samples from Mars. "We'd be very keen to get

access to these (Chinese lunar) samples to test out our facilities and also to do some science," said Prof. Barstow.



The University of Sharjah is the only institute in the United Arab Emirates with an optical observatory

Speaking in a radio interview in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in early June, Prof. Barstow made the remarks in response to questions about the successful touching down of China's Chang'e 6 probe on the far side of the moon, and its return to earth with samples from its surface.

Prof. Barstow was in Dubai in his capacity as a member of the Board of Trustees at UAE's University of Sharjah. The university is UAE's only institute with its own optical observatory which includes a reflector telescope of 45 centimeters in diameter, connected to a refractor telescope of 20 centimeters in diameter.

Prof. Barstow said he, like many other scientists, was thrilled about China's Chang'e 6 probe landing on the far side of the moon. He described the event as "exciting" as it was the first time for a probe to land on the side of the moon, which we do not see as we look up the skies and then manage to bring samples to earth.

"What we see when we look at the moon in the night sky at the moment is quite a smooth face. And that's because it's been covered by volcanic activity in the past, caused by the sort of heating of the moon as it goes around the earth.

"That hasn't happened on the far side of the moon. So, the terrain there is much rockier, and there are none of what we call oceans, which are these smooth plains of volcanic material."

Missions to the moon so far have focused on exploring the near side of the moon. China's June mission was the first to successfully land on the far side of the moon and return home carrying samples from its hitherto unknown and unseen surface.

"It's really impressive that they (the Chinese) have done this. They are only the third country to retrieve samples from the moon. But also, they are retrieving it from a much more difficult place to reach. The far side of the moon is out of communications, so getting down on that area is a much bigger challenge than landing on the bit of the moon that faces us," said Prof. Barstow.

With the success of the Chinese probe, humans by now have accomplished the task of discovering the known and the mysterious sides of the moon, raising hopes of a new epoch in space missions to explore for minerals on the moon.

But Prof. Barstow did not foresee a chance to extract materials from the lunar land and bringing them down to the earth.

"Mining is a possibility, but I don't really expect the moon to be a great place for mining things that we can't otherwise get more easily on earth," the astrophysicist said when asked whether the Chinese aim from getting rock samples from the far side of the moon was for mining purposes.

"I think mining is maybe more important when we go further out into the solar system, perhaps to the asteroids, which do contain significant quantities of rare materials that we might need."

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