

Wanna buy a piece of the Moon?

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- *From:* Rich <none@xxxxxxxx>
 - *Date:* Thu, 20 Oct 2005 18:43:17 -0400
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US company plans to sell land on the moon to Chinese

A US company has set up operations in China to sell land on the moon for 289 yuan (37 dollars) an acre, cashing in on renewed interest in space travel after the successful five-day voyage of Shenzhou VI.

The so-called Lunar Embassy, touted as the first extraterrestrial estate agency, started operations Wednesday in Beijing, the China Daily reported.

It will issue customers a "certificate" that ensures property ownership, including rights to use the land and minerals up to three kilometres (miles) underground, said Li Jie, agent for the company in China.

"We define it as a kind of novelty gift with the potential of unlimited increase in value," said Li.

Lunar Embassy was set up by US entrepreneur Dennis Hope in 1980, 11 years after the Apollo II mission first landed people on the moon.

Hope believes a loophole in the 1967 UN Outer Space Treaty makes his property sales legitimate. The agreement forbids governments from owning extraterrestrial property but fails to mention corporations or individuals.

Hope said he has 3.5 million customers, including politicians and movie stars, who had purchased land on the moon.

The report said China is the eighth country to have a Lunar Embassy after the United States, Germany, Britain, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.

Li said he had received more than 400 telephone orders from Chinese in the past few days.

The company could run into problems in China, though, with the Chaoyang District branch of Beijing's Administration for Industry and Commerce launching an investigation.

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The Beijing News cited Chaoyang bureau staff as saying sale of land on the moon was not listed as the company's business when it was registered.

Shenzhou VI, China's second manned space flight, successfully returned to earth on Monday. It carried astronauts Fei Junlong and Nie Haisheng around the globe for five days, sparking patriotic celebrations across the country.

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- ◇ *From:* Tom Hise

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