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Russian Space Agency Requests $155 Million to Help Europe Get to Mars

By The Moscow Times

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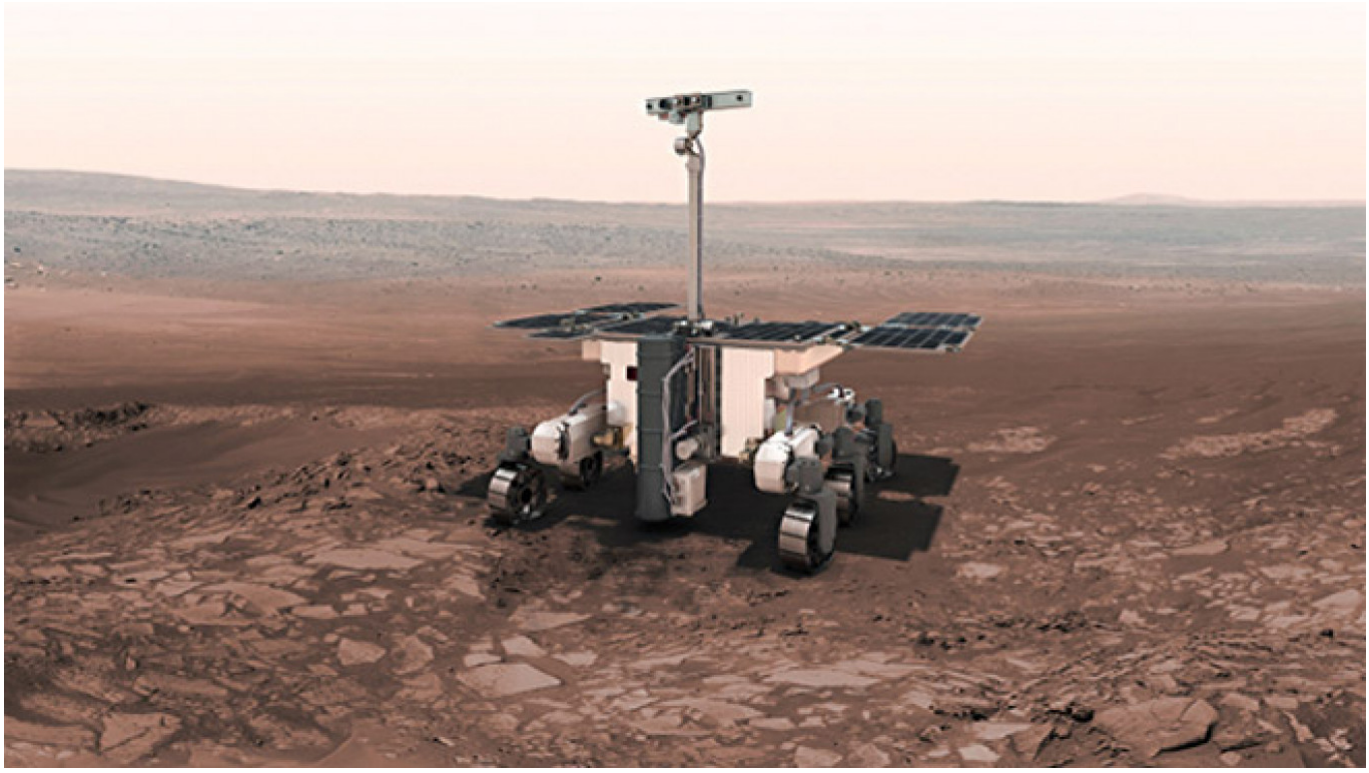

An artist rendering of the 2018 ExoMars rover, currently being designed by Roscosmos.

Russian space agency Roscosmos needs 5.6 billion rubles ($155 million) to complete its share of a large-scale joint Mars exploration project with the European Space Agency (ESA), Interfax reported Tuesday.

The project, called ExoMars, began as a joint project between the ESA and U.S. space agency NASA to send a pair of unmanned probes to Mars. But in 2012, budget cuts in Washington forced NASA to withdraw from the project, and Roscosmos was quickly tapped as a replacement.

One of the key objectives of the ExoMars mission is to search for life on the Red Planet.

The mission involves two stages: one in 2016 and another in 2018. In both, unmanned probes will hitch rides on Russian Proton rockets. Such rockets, however, have seen a number

of launch failures in the last three years.

The requested $155 million will pay for the two launches, as well as finance the completion of the 2018 ExoMars lander, which is being designed by Russia and outfitted largely with Russian scientific equipment, according to a draft federal space strategy for 2016-2025 obtained by Interfax.

The proposed strategy document has been submitted for government approval.

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