

Russia Postpones Lunar Mission Over 'Problems During Testing'

By [AFP](#)

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Roscosmos

Russia revealed Tuesday it postponed its first mission to the moon's surface in decades as a result of "problems" encountered during tests of the Luna-25 spacecraft.

The country's space agency Roscosmos announced last week that the mission – originally scheduled for Oct. 1 – from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in the Far East had been moved to May 2022.

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The Luna-25 mission to the Moon's south pole aims to probe ice deposits there. It is set to be Russia's first mission to the moon's surface in 45 years and the first in its post-Soviet history.

The chief engineer of Russia's state NPO Lavochkin design bureau explained the delay

Tuesday saying that "more time" was needed to complete successful trials.

"We have encountered certain problems during testing," Alexander Shirshakov told the Interfax news agency.

"A safe landing system is of crucial importance and we are working on Luna-25's soft landing system," Shirshakov said.

The race back to the moon is in full swing after China in December 2020 became the first country to return samples from the moon since the Soviet Luna-24 mission in 1976.

U.S. space agency NASA also has pledged to land the next man and the first woman on the moon in 2024 as part of its Artemis program.

Meanwhile, Russia and China in March announced plans for a joint lunar station.

Russia's space program inherited from the Soviet Union has in recent years suffered from problems like corruption scandals and budget cuts.

Its space industry took a blow in 2020 when it lost its monopoly over manned flights to the ISS after the successful mission of Space X, the company belonging to U.S. billionaire Elon Musk.

Roscosmos has however announced a number of ventures including a mission to Venus and the creation of a rocket capable of making round trips to space.

Russia has also indicated that it plans to leave the International Space Station and launch its own orbital station in 2025.

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