NASA Selects Moon Mapper for Mission of Opportunity

February 3 2005

NASA chose the Moon Mineralogy Mapper (M3) to fly as part of the scientific payload for the Indian Space Research Organization's (ISRO) Chandraayan-1 mission, slated for launch in 2007. The M3 is designed to create a mineral-resource map of the moon. It will be flown as part of the Chandraayan-1 mission if it is selected by ISRO in an independent competition.

"This exciting scientific experiment will provide detailed maps of the moon's surface geology and mineral composition for the first time," said NASA's Deputy Associate Administrator of the Science Mission Directorate at NASA Headquarters, Dr. Ghassem Asrar. "The M3 investigation also complements the six experiments recently selected by NASA in response to the Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) Announcement of Opportunity. Together, the M3 and LRO investigations support NASA research and exploration objectives for the moon," he said.

The final confirmation of the M3 investigation is subject to successful negotiation of an international agreement between NASA and ISRO.

Created in 1992, NASA's Discovery Program sponsors frequent, cost-capped solar system exploration missions with highly focused scientific goals. In July 2004, NASA received 18 proposals in response to an Announcement of Opportunity for Discovery missions and Missions of Opportunity. Proposals were evaluated for scientific merit, technical, management and cost feasibility. The M3 mission was proposed to the

Discovery Program as a Mission of Opportunity.

"We are looking forward to the March release of the Discovery 12 Announcement of Opportunity that will provide greater flexibility commensurate with the technical complexities associated with Discovery class experiments," said Andrew Dantzler, Acting Director of NASA's Solar System Division.