

U.S. space program may be falling behind

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Increasing competition from Asia and Europe has some scientists worried the United States might lose its position as the world's space leader.

Part of the problem is that Congress isn't sure how it will pay for key elements of President Bush's space program that, among other things, aims to send astronauts back to the moon by 2018, the Christian Science Monitor reported Tuesday.

And foreign scientific competition in general is leading some to worry the global center of gravity in science and technology fields may shift to Asia and Europe if the United States fails to adequately support its research enterprise, the Monitor reported.

With a gross domestic output of \$7.3 trillion, second only to the United States in economic terms, China is expected to overtake Japan and move into second place in global research and development.

On a continental scale, Asia is projected to overtake the Americas this year in total R&D spending and pull well ahead next year, the Battelle Memorial Institute in Columbus, Ohio, told the newspaper.

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