

'First Pakistani in space' congratulates India on Mars mission

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A Pakistani explorer expected to become her country's first person in space congratulated India on Thursday on reaching Mars on its maiden attempt.

India won the Asian space race to the Red Planet on Wednesday when its unmanned Mangalyaan successfully entered the Red Planet's orbit after a 10-month journey on a budget of just \$74 million.

Despite having a [space agency](#) since 1961 Pakistan has not yet launched a satellite into orbit.

But Namira Salim, the first Pakistani explorer to reach both poles said India's achievement had made the region proud.

"The success of the Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), Mangalyaan, is a giant leap for South Asia," said Salim, who has booked a ticket on Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic space project planned for 2015.

"I commend the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), and all its scientists and researchers for not only achieving this astronomical feat, but also for achieving it in the most cost-effective manner."

Pakistan has not yet officially congratulated India. The neighbours have fought three wars, two of them over the disputed territory of Kashmir.

Relations between the two countries have taken a turn for the worse after

Pakistan's top envoy met Kashmiri separatist leaders in August, with India responding by calling off talks between the countries' foreign secretaries.

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