

[India is the first Asian nation to touch Mars orbit, joins elite global space club](#)

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India became the first Asian nation to reach the red planet when its indigenously made unmanned spacecraft entered the orbit of Mars on Wednesday, the first mission in the world to be successful in touching Mars on its first attempt.

The spacecraft called “Mangalyaan,” or “Mar’s craft” in Hindi, which was launched in November last year, slowed down just enough to touch the orbit early Wednesday here, securing India a place in the elite global space club of Martian explorers.

Images of beaming scientists clapping and hugging each other in joy at the command center in the southern city of Bangalore were shown live in a nationally televised minute-to-minute broadcast after a breathless, nail-biting countdown during the spacecraft’s final leg.

Calling it the “national pride event” the Indian Space Research Organization also showed it live on Facebook and Twitter.

Headline Today channel called it “India’s date with the red planet,” and NDTV 24 x7 channel called it “India’s big leap,” reflecting the huge surge of national pride sweeping the nation.

Wearing a symbolic red vest, India’s prime minister, Narendra Modi, witnessed the final insertion of the Mission Orbiter Mars, or MOM as it is fondly called here.

“Mars has found MOM today,” Modi said in his short address after the good news. “When this mission’s shortname became MOM, I was convinced that Mom never disappoints. History has been created today. India is the only country to have succeeded to reach the red planet on its first attempt.”

More than half of the 51 Mars missions launched globally have failed. India’s Mars entry is the fourth, after the United States, Europe and Russia. But India’s mission cost a fraction of NASA’s \$670 million Maven which entered Mars on Sunday. The Curiosity Rover, which touched down on Mars in 2012, cost nearly \$2 billion.

By comparison, India’s \$72 million Mars orbiter is the cheapest inter-planetary mission in the world. Modi said that India’s Mars mission cost less than what it took to make the famous Hollywood space movie “Gravity.”