

# NASA to test new Mars landing tech

**Washington:** NASA's Low-Density Supersonic Decelerator (LDSD) project will be flying a rocket-powered, saucer-shaped test vehicle into near-space from the US Navy's Pacific Missile Range Facility on Kauai, Hawaii, in June. The LDSD crosscutting demonstration mission will test breakthrough technologies that will enable large payloads to be safely landed on the surface of Mars, or other planetary bodies with atmospheres, including the Earth, NASA said in a statement.

The final test of LDSD technology was carried out at Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, on Tuesday.

During the "spin table test," the 15-foot-wide, 7,000-pound test vehicle was spun up to 30 rpm to check its balance. In mid-April, the vehicle will be flown to Kauai. During the June experimental flight test, a balloon will carry the test vehicle from the naval facility to an altitude of about 120,000 feet (36 km).

There it will be dropped over the Pacific and its booster rocket will kick in and carry it to 180,000 feet (55 km), accelerating to Mach 4. Once in the very rarified air high above the Pacific, the saucer will begin a series of automated tests of two breakthrough technologies. *IAN S*