NORFOLK: A major reason to keep a close eye on technology in the automobile industry and NASA scientists think something as simple as a child's toy design may help solve the problem. Safety, landing a large spacecraft on the Red Planet is just one of many engineering challenges the agency faces as it eyes an ambitious goal of sending humans into deep space by the 2030s will poses extreme challenges. The agency's scientists acknowledge they also

such as the International Space Station exploded in October soon after liftoff from Wallops Island, Virginia, numerous scientific experiments went up in flames with it. But one NASA experiment - an uncrewed spacecraft for North Korea launched in April - continues to provide unexpected insights.

"We make use of that atmosphere as much as we can, because it means we don't have to launch as much propellant as we would if we had a vacuum system," said Peter Huber, a NASA astronaut.

Such an inflatable heat shield could help a spacecraft reach the high-altitude southern plains of Mars and other areas that would otherwise be inaccessible under existing technology. The experts note that rockets alone can't be used to land a large craft on Mars as there are too many atmospheric conditions. Parachutes also won't work for a large space capsule needed to send humans to Mars, they said.

"With the inflatable, the craft could enter the atmosphere at a higher speed before it deploys something to slow it down, whether resembling a giant mushroom. "We try to not use propulsion if we don't have to," said John Zarzela, a NASA engineer.

"An inflatable heat shield could be a real advantage because you can have more [payload] on the spacecraft. The craft also wouldn't have to go through the harsh, high-temperature, high-pressure conditions that happen near the surface of a planet." said John Zarzela, a NASA engineer.

NASA explores inflatable spacecraft technology

North Korea blasts US for sanctions over Sony attack

North Korea on Sunday criticized the United States for imposing sanctions on media companies and individuals over a cyber attack on Sony Pictures, the latest fallout from a Hollywood movie depicting the fictional assassination of North Korea's leader.

"The idea is that you would have something that could be packed up, put it in a very small volume and then deployed into a very large volume," Anthony Calabrese, principal investigator for materials and structures for hypersonic reentry at Langley said in a statement Monday. "That is what we would like to have something that could be packed up, put in a very small volume and then deployed into a very large volume," Anthony Calabrese, principal investigator for materials and structures for hypersonic reentry at Langley said in a statement Monday.

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