“Here’s some of the stories trending This Week at NASA!”

During a March 10 hearing of the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, NASA Administrator Charlie Bolden testified about the $19 billion dollar Fiscal Year 2017 budget proposed for the agency by President Obama.

In his remarks, the Administrator outlined the many benefits that this investment in NASA’s present will yield for the future.

The funding will enable a future where we send American astronauts to Mars in the 2030s; where more Americans work in good-paying Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) based careers; where future generations can breathe cleaner air, drink cleaner water, and fly on cleaner, greener, more fuel-efficient aircraft; and a future where humankind has a deeper understanding of our universe, our place in it, and our own planet.
On March 10 at Stennis Space Center, in Mississippi, RS-25 engine number 2059 became the first flight engine for NASA’s new Space Launch System (SLS) rocket to be test fired.

Four RS-25s will power the core stage of the SLS.

The flight certification test of this engine is a major milestone in NASA’s return to deep space exploration and the Journey to Mars.

On March 4, construction crews at NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center "topped out" Test Stand 4697 by welding the structure’s top-most beam into place.

The 85-foot-tall test stand is one of two being built to test hardware for the SLS rocket.

Test Stand 4697 will use hydraulic cylinders to subject the liquid oxygen tank and hardware of the SLS core stage to the same conditions it will experience during a launch.

The other test stand -- 4693 -- will be used for similar testing on the core stage's liquid hydrogen tank.
Both stands are scheduled to be completed later this year.

The SLS will be the world's most powerful rocket and carry astronauts in NASA's Orion spacecraft on deep-space missions.

During a March 9 news conference at Johnson Space Center, NASA astronaut Kate Rubins and her Expedition 48 crewmates, Anatoly Ivanishin of the Russian space agency Roscosmos and astronaut Takuya Onishi of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency talked about their upcoming mission to the International Space Station.

The trio will launch to the station in June from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

During their four-month tour, they'll help with about 250 science investigations and technology demonstrations.

Research being conducted on the space station will enable future long-duration human and robotic exploration into deep space, including to an asteroid and Mars.
NASA collaborated with the Exploratorium Science Center in San Francisco and the National Science Foundation to provide live NASA Television coverage of the March 8 total solar eclipse from Micronesia.

The fully eclipsed sun was only visible in parts of South East Asia, but the live broadcast made the phenomenon available to millions of people around the world.

The next total solar eclipse visible from the United States will occur on Aug. 21, 2017.

On March 6, 2015, NASA's Dawn spacecraft arrived at the dwarf planet Ceres.

The spacecraft recently celebrated the one-year anniversary with new images of Ahuna Mons - the mysterious 3-mile-high mountain that investigators initially thought was pyramid-shaped. However, subsequent, more detailed images showed the mountain was actually shaped more like a dome.

Dawn's latest images of Ahuna Mons, taken 120 times closer than in February 2015, are
helping researchers learn more details about
the mountain - except exactly how it formed.

Dawn's arrival at Ceres made it the first-ever
spacecraft to reach a dwarf planet.

And that's what's up this week @NASA …

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