

FIRST MALAYSIAN IN SPACE

The first Malaysian to go to space will make an expedition to the International Space Station (ISS) on a Russian Soyuz rocket on October 10, 2007. He will return from space on October 21, 2007 and an official recognition ceremony for him as a cosmonaut would be held in Moscow on November 11, 2007.

Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Deputy Prime Minister Dato' Sri Mohd. Najib Tun Abdul Razak will witness the launch of the space expedition in Kuala Lumpur.

This achievement was made possible through the Angkasawan Programme (www.angkasawan.com.my) which was launched by the Government as a result of an offset agreement between Malaysia and Russia. The Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation was tasked to implement the programme including choosing the candidate who would undergo 18 months of training at Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre, Star City, Russia before being launched to the ISS.

More than 11,000 applications have been received nationwide for the programme, which was conducted in an open selection process from October 2003 and ended in September 2006. Only 2 candidates were selected to undergo the final training phase in Russia. They are Dr. Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor and Dr. Faiz Khaleed.

A number of scientific studies will be conducted while onboard the ISS, encompassing Life Sciences, and Physical Sciences and Space Medicine including psychological effects.

It is hoped that, this programme, will give the impetus to develop the interest in science and technology, particularly in space science among young Malaysians.