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National Space Agency to take off by July

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Government's very own National Space Agency, similar to National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the United States, is expected to be operational by July.

Deputy Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Zainal Dahalan said the NSA's main aim was to co-ordinate Malaysia's requirements in aerospace and satellite technology, apart from identifying necessary infrastructure and formulating a national space policy.

"The agency will also be formulating a strategic plan for the country's space and satellite programmes," Zainal told a Press conference at the Parliament lobby.

The NSA is expected to be managed by the ministry while its policy would be put in place by the National Aerospace Council chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The council will come under the purview of the Prime Minister's Department.

Zainal said Dr Mahathir's recent visit to Russia was an important step towards the development of aerospace and satellite technology in Malaysia.

He said during the visit, two Russian companies involved in the aerospace and satellite industry had agreed to co-operate with Malaysian companies.

Russian aerospace industry's leading company, NPO Mashinostroenia had agreed to formulate, build, transfer technology, conduct human resources training and launch a new satellite for remote sensing.

The working agreement, with Astronautic Technology (M) Sdn Bhd, also includes the commissioning of an earth control station to receive data from the satellite.

The control station, in Temerloh is ready, physically.

Zainal said a second company from Siberia, NPO of Applied Mechanics had offered to build the Measat 6 satellite in a proposed joint venture with Malaysia's Binariang Satellite System.

"Our officials have also visited the M.V. Chrunichev Space Centre in Moscow to study the possibility of launching Measat 6 via the Proton or any other rockets owned by the Russian Government," Zainal said.

He told the House that a specific agreement of scientific and technical co-operation between Malaysia and Russia is expected to be sealed soon and a bilateral working commission was also in the pipeline.

"We expect the agreement to be signed during Russian Industry, Science and Technology Minister I.I. Klebanov's visit here later this year," he said replying to Datuk Zulhasnan Rafique (BN-Wangsa Maju).

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