

# Cosmonaut position open by year's end

STAR

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ASPIRING cosmonauts can start sending in their resumes to the National Space Agency (NSA) by year's end, reported *Mingguan Malaysia*.

Quoting NSA director-general Datuk Dr Mazlan Othman, the weekly newspaper said a special committee would be set up to determine the criteria and vet the applications.

"I have met with the Russians in June and we are in the process of drawing up the criteria," she said.

She said potential cosmonauts had to be fit, of a certain age group, and academically qualified.

Dr Mazlan said the committee was likely to be chaired by Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

She said the agency was unable to move faster because an agreement with the Russians had yet to be officially confirmed.

The plan to send a Malaysian into space was part of a RM3.42bil deal to purchase Sukhoi SU-30 MKN fighter jets from Russia.

Dr Mazlan said the cost of sending a cosmonaut into

space was between RM10mil and RM20mil.

She said the training and eventual sending off to space of the Malaysian cosmonaut could take place by 2005.

"The Malaysian cosmonaut will be in space for eight days at the International Space Station," she said.

In *Berita Minggu*, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was reported as saying that the tag of "Ultra Malay" did not apply to him anymore.

He said the tag was given to him early in his career as a politician because he was perceived as only interested in championing the cause of the Malays.

Dr Mahathir, who became the country's fourth prime minister in 1981, said the biggest achievement of his career was in uniting the people of various races in the country.