

Space stint will show that Islam is all for progress

Abdullah teleconferencing with astronaut candidates Dr Muszaphar and Dr Faiz yesterday.

BANTING: The experience of Malaysia's first astronaut will prove to the world that Islam is not a hindrance to progress.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the needs of the national astronaut, who will travel to the International Space Station, had been looked into, considering that he is a Muslim.

He said guidelines for the astronaut to carry out his routines and prayers in the space station had been issued during a seminar held early this year.

want our astronaut to show the world that Islam is not a hindrance to progress, even while exploring space," he said when opening the National Space Centre in Sungai Lang here yesterday

Two trainee astronauts, Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor and Kapt Dr Faiz Khaleed, are in Russia to undergo a one-year training at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre before one of

them is selected for the journey into space.

At the ceremony, Abdullah also held a video conference with the two astronauts for about five minutes.

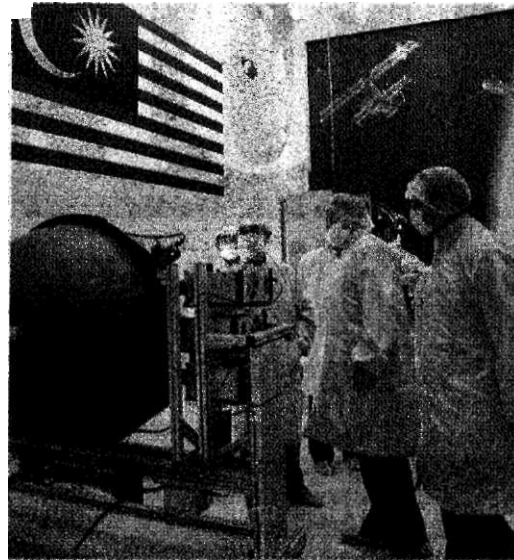
Abdullah spoke to them about their health and training, and informed them that Malaysians had high hopes that the two astronauts would do the country proud.

Dr Sheikh Muszaphar and Dr Faiz were happy to receive the video call from the Prime Minister. They told him that they were learning Russian and getting acclimatised with the training centre's surroundings.

"We are treated very well," said Dr Sheikh Muszaphar, when asked by Abdullah about the centre's service.

Dr Faiz said both of them were getting a lot of invitations to break fast from Malaysians staying in Russia.

Malaysia moved a step closer to the final frontier with the launch-



Abdullah (second from left) being briefed on a RazakSat satellite component. — Bernama picture

ing of the multi-million dollar space centre.

The 140-hectare facility here comes complete with a mission control centre that will play a cru-

cial role in monitoring, receiving information and contacting the nation's first astronaut in the International Space Station next year. — Bernama