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# Space science foray part of our vision for progress: PM

**IPOH:** The country's involvement in the space industry is part of broader efforts to attain the Vision 2020 objective of turning Malaysia into a developed country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday.

He said to bring about progress, the government had to implement various initiatives, one of which was Malaysia's foray into space science.

"We've worked hard to forge close relations with countries having space agencies like Japan, Russia, Kazakhstan and the United States. All this will bring us immense benefits," he said when opening the Gugusan Manjoi Administrative and Commercial Complex here yesterday.

Malaysia has joined the ranks of space-exploring nations after its *angkasawan*, Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor Sheikh Mustapha, spent 11 days in space

doing various experiments at the International Space Station before returning to Earth on Sunday.

Abdullah said the considerable amount of money spent on the Malaysian space programme was not a waste considering the benefits that could be derived from it.

"It's not a waste. We've the money and ability. There's still money to carry out projects and programmes meant to enhance the well-being of the people and bring about further progress to the country," he said.

Abdullah said Japan and several European countries had shown a keen interest in the outcome of experiments undertaken by the Malaysian *angkasawan*, including one on cancer cells.

Barisan Nasional Backbenchers' Club (BNBBC) acting chairman Datuk Raja Ahmad Zainuddin

Raja Omar said Sheikh Muszaphar will be given a special reception at Parliament House when he returns from Moscow in a fortnight.

"We have discussed our plan with the Dewan Rakyat Speaker and want to be the first to host Dr Sheikh Muszaphar on his return after two weeks of quarantine in Moscow," he told reporters at Parliament lobby yesterday. It will be a mark of respect for his efforts in making the space mission a success.

Raja Ahmad Zainuddin said BNBBC wanted to play a role in helping the government develop space science and would discuss with Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis how best to generate interest among the young.

"We also plan to hold a roadshow on Dr Sheikh Muszaphar's feat at schools and institutions of higher learning for



the benefit of students," he added.

Sheikh Muszaphar landed at Arklyk, Kazakhstan, in a Soyuz TMA-10 capsule on Sunday with Russian cosmonauts Fyodor Yurchikhin and Oleg Kotov after a journey of three hours and 25 minutes from the International Space Station (ISS).

He left for ISS in a Soyuz TMA-11 rocket with Commander Peggy

Whitson of the United States and flight engineer Yuri Malechenko of Russia from the Baikonur Cosmodrome on Oct 10.

During his 11 days on ISS, Sheikh Muszaphar was involved in several scientific experiments, including the effects of microgravity and radiation on cells and microbes, and protein crystallisation.

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