

# An inspiration to all

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## Sheikh Muszaphar hopes to see more Angkasawan

**BAIKONUR (Kazakhstan):** Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor's childhood dream will come true when he blasts off into space, but he hopes to be just the first of many more Malaysian Angkasawan to come.

"I've dreamt of this since I was 10 years old, and now I am living the dream of all Malaysians," he said, just hours before launching into space at 9.22pm (Malaysian time) yesterday.

The dashing cosmonaut hopes his "impossible dream", once it comes true, will make young boys and girls believe they can reach for the stars.

"I want to inspire them as the first Malaysian in space, just like Yuri Gagarin (the first man in space) and Neil Armstrong (first man on the moon) still inspire many today.

"I hope to make them believe in their capabilities and get them interested in science, mathematics and engineering.

"Hopefully after me, there will be more Angkasawan in the future," he said.



The orthopaedic surgeon, however, admits he expected to be the chosen one.

"To be honest I was not really surprised because I worked hard, was focused and motivated. I sacrificed everything - my life, surgery, business, my loved ones and modelling," he said.

Dr Sheikh Muszaphar, however, believes that his trip to space is secondary to what he will learn and bring back from the experience.

"More important is what I can contribute to Malaysia, such as the technologies I learned from Russia that I hope to share with our sci-

entists.

"I hope Malaysia will rally to enter a new era and one day, we'll have our own space rocket and become a leader in the aerospace arena," he said.

On a personal level, he looks forward to the life-changing experience in space, including gaining new spiritual experience in the skies.

"I want to share my experience of fasting and praying in space with Malaysians and all Muslims. I think space will change my life perception," he said.

Fully trained and prepared, Dr Sheikh Muszaphar was calm and ready the night before his big day.

He spent his time reading the Quran and conducting *sembahyang hajat*, and calling his family and loved one.

He wants to succeed in his mission so as not to let down the scientists who had spent three years preparing for the experiments he will conduct.