

Faiz as excited as everyone

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BAIKONUR (Kazakhstan):

Kapt Dr Faiz Khaleed may not have been chosen to take to the skies, but he is as excited as everyone else witnessing the launch of the Russian Soyuz TMA-11 spacecraft sending Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor and his fellow travellers to the International Space Station (ISS).

"Of course I am excited to be with Malaysians here watching Dr Sheikh Muszaphar being launched into space to fulfil Malaysia's dream.

"I hope all goes well. It is exciting for me as I will be actively involved in the mission from the Russian Control Centre (in Moscow)," said Dr Faiz, who watched the historic event 7km away from the launch pad.

From ground control, he will be on hand to assist Dr Sheikh Muszaphar if he experiences any problems, including those with the scientific experiments.

"I hope all will be fine and I have no doubt in you doing the experiments out there. We both trained very hard at Star City for a year. So any questions you have I will assist you at the Control Centre," he told Dr Sheikh Muszaphar.

However, this is not the end for the 27-year-old armed forces dental surgeon, who wants to volunteer for the Mars mission.

"If given the chance, I would be happy to volunteer for the mission since I am qualified as a cosmonaut. The mission is open to all so why not we try to participate," he said.

In the nearer future, Dr Faiz said he would



Green to go: Dr Faiz and Dr Sheikh Muszaphar gesturing just before the launch of the space mission to the ISS last night. — Reuters

be attached to the Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre as recommended by the Russian Federal Space Agency and supported by the Science, Innovation and Technology Minister Datuk Seri Dr Jamaluddin Jarjis.

Flattered that Dr Jamaluddin plans to propose him for a second mission, he said: "With the blessing of the Government and Malaysians, I will be happy to further my training for the next mission."