

Angkasawan coming home

T. Malay Mail p8 11 19.10.07

THE first Malaysian to fly into space, Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor Sheikh Mustapha, is making preparations for his return to Earth this Sunday from the International Space Station.

He will return with Fyodor Yurchikhin and Oleg Kotov in the Soyuz TMA-10 spacecraft which the two Russian cosmonauts had used to go to the ISS in April on Expedition 15.

National Angkasawan Programme director Col Dr Zulkeffeli Mat Jusoh said the spacecraft carrying the three astronauts was expected to land in the Arkylk region of Kazakhstan, some 1,500km from Moscow.

For the return journey, Dr Sheikh Muszaphar has to ensure that his weight is 82kg, as it was when he left for the ISS on Oct 10 aboard the Soyuz TMA-11 spacecraft which is now docked at the ISS.

"If his weight has exceeded the 82kg while in the ISS, he will be required to reduce his weight through exercise in a special cubicle in the ISS. This is to maintain equilibrium in the Soyuz spacecraft," he told reporters in Moscow yesterday.

Dr Zulkeffeli said he will leave for Qostanay in Kazakhstan, not far from where the Soyuz capsule was expected to land, to bring Dr Sheikh Muszaphar to Moscow.

"I have to be there to give Dr Sheikh Muszaphar a medical examination.

"He will be brought to a temporary medical centre before being taken to the nearest airport to be flown to the Star City astronaut training centre in Moscow," he said.

He said the Soyuz TMA-10 spacecraft was expected to land at 2.37pm Moscow time (6.37pm in Malaysia), and that it will take



MISSION ACCOMPLISHED: Dr Sheikh Muszaphar places the third box containing research cells behind the control panel to be kept at maximum temperature

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eight hours after landing to reach the Russian capital.

Dr Zulkeffeli said the preparations Dr Sheikh Muszaphar has to make for his return include relocating his special seat in the

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search projects and personal belongings.

"By right, he is only allowed to carry up to 5kg but the European Space Agency acceded to our request to allow the additional 2kg," he said.

Dr Sheikh Muszaphar had also conducted experiments for ESA on the effects of micro gravity on the back of the human body, motor perception, resilience before and after being in the ISS, and stability of sight and the body.

The two astronauts who went to the ISS along with Dr Sheikh Muszaphar on Oct 10, Commander Peggy Whitson and Flight Engineer Yuri Malenchenko, will take the place of Yurchikhin and Kotov on the ISS. Another astronaut, Clay Anderson, is also on board the ISS.

Yurchikhin will hand over command of the ISS to Whitson on Sunday. — Bernama

Soyuz spacecraft and listing the paraphernalia he will bring back to Earth.

The angkasawan is allowed to carry up to 7kg of paraphernalia, including the findings of his re-