

# Russian Space Agency To Launch Kliper Project

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The Russian Space Agency (Roskosmos) is about to start its Kliper launch vehicle project, the head of the agency told a Moscow press conference Thursday, reports RIA Novosti.

Speaking to reporters after a Cabinet session, Anatoli Perminov said other national space agencies, in particular the European Space Agency, were very much interested in the Kliper project.

He said that the Kliper launch vehicle, which Russia is to build in collaboration with other countries, would be able to carry a crew of six and land on first-class airfields.

During the press conference, Perminov also spoke briefly about Roskosmos's planned Phobos Grunt mission to collect soil samples from the martian moon Phobos. "We see this as a Russian project, but are open to the idea of foreign participation. We would like it to be an international project," he said.

The agency head also said an Earth-based experiment to prepare a mission to Mars was planned for next year and that over two dozen people had already volunteered to take part in the project. "This experiment will be invaluable," he said.

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