

Malaysians to help select first astronaut

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Malaysian citizens will reportedly be able to help choose their nation's first astronaut.

Malaysia Science Minister Jamaluddin Jarjis said citizens will be able to choose from among a short list of candidates and then vote by text message, the BBC reported Wednesday.

The Malaysian astronaut is to take part in a Russian-led space mission in 2007.

The would-be astronaut candidates' profiles and their progress during training will be posted on the Internet. Citizens will then be allowed to vote and Malaysian space agency officials will take those votes into consideration when they make their selection, officials said.

If the contest proves popular and the government charges for the votes, it may even be able to cover the cost of its space program, the BBC reported.

Of the 11,000 initial candidates, officials say only 200 of them have been able to run the required 2.2 miles in less than 20 minutes and pass the space agency's medical examination.

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