

Tokyo Shortly To Decide On Participation In Russian Kliper Project

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Tokyo intends to decide already this year on its participation in the Russian project to build a non-expendable manned spacecraft, which will be called Kliper. It is expected to replace the American shuttles that are now being used to fly crews and cargoes to the International Space Station, reports Itar-Tass.

A special team has already been formed here to look into the problem. Kiioshi Higuchi, member of the Board of Directors of the Japanese National Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), heads the team, the Kyodo Tsushin News Agency reported on Thursday.

The European Space Agency, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan had previously evinced interest in their participation in the new Russian space project. In considering the problem, Tokyo is proceeding primarily from the fact that the United States is determined to discontinue all flights of its shuttles by 2010 and to concentrate its efforts on the preparation of expeditions to the Moon and Mars.

The Kliper project will give Russia, the EU countries, and Japan a chance to make effective use of the International Space Station even without America's active participation.

A Kliper spacecraft will be able to carry six people and to take to the ISS and bring back five hundred kilograms of cargoes. A rocket will be used to boost it into outer space.

A Kliper will be able to fly autonomously for fifteen days running. Its non-expendable recovery capsule is designed for twenty-five flights. The spacecraft will have a service life of ten years. It is planned to launch the first Kliper into outer space in 2013.

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