

Russia To Assist China's Lunar Research Program

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Russia is ready to help China implement its lunar research program, the head of the Russian Federal Space Agency said Monday, reports RIA Novosti.

Anatoly Perminov said China had undoubtedly become one of the leading space powers since conducting a successful manned mission involving the Shenzhou 6 spacecraft. "I think the next stages of [China's] manned space flight program will presumably involve a crew of astronauts, a space walk, and the construction of a space station," he said.

Perminov said Russia could help China train its astronauts for a space walk and develop lunar research equipment. He explained that Russia did not intend to participate in a joint research program but to simply provide assistance, including support for China's manned lunar exploration, a project envisioned for 2018.

"Russia does not have a special lunar research program," Perminov said, adding that the two countries had approved a strategic concept to conduct unmanned lunar research under their current bilateral space cooperation program, which expires in 2006.

According to the official, Russia and China are pursuing successful completion of the current program and a new cooperation program for 2007-2010, which envisages construction of new space systems, including an observatory, radio telescopes, and remote sensing

equipment to study Mars' moon Phobos.

"China has expressed interest in the projects and has sent us its proposals, which we are reviewing now," Perminov said, adding that they might be approved by the end of 2006.

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