

Russian company sets sights on the moon

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The president of a Russian spacecraft company announced the corporation plans to launch the country's first manned flight around the moon in 2011.

Nikolai Sevastyanov, president of the Energia Rocket and Space Corporation, said at the Fifth Airspace Congress in Moscow that the mission would last until 2012, the country's Novosti newspaper reported Thursday.

"The Energia Rocket and Space Corporation plans to explore the moon in three stages: a Soyuz spacecraft flight to the moon, the construction of a permanent base on the moon (from 2010 to 2025), and the industrial exploration of space around the Earth's satellite," Sevastyanov said.

He said the missions would focus on conducting astrophysical research from the moon, researching the transportation of environmentally unfriendly industries to the natural satellite and the extraction of raw materials to assist with energy demands on Earth.

Sevastyanov said the missions would be carried out by a new version of the Soyuz spacecraft, expected to be ready for use 2010.

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