

South Africa unveils space agency

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South Africa's minister for science and technology GNM Pandor unveils the national space agency in Johannesburg, December 9. South Africa unveiled its national space agency on Thursday, aiming to become a leader in earth observation technology across the continent in 10 years, the minister of science and technology said.

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"Our combined efforts at enhancing South Africa's space capabilities will be of immense value to the scientific community in the Southern African region," Naledi Pandor said.

"We believe (the launch of SANSA) will stimulate investment and the local scientific research sector," she added.

The agency, which already has two micro-satellites, will produce timely data imagery to help detect natural disasters and monitor water resources around South Africa and the continent, Pandor said at the launch.

The new agency, which aims to bring together previously un-allied experts in the field, will also seek to revive several space facilities that were mothballed in the 1990's during apartheid rule, said a government official.

However, the establishment of the agency's new structures will mean full operations will only resume in April 2012.

The agency's interim chief executive Sandile Malinga estimated that it would cost South Africa approximately 600 million rands (86.7 million dollars) a year to run the agency.

"These are conservative figures. Our satellites will be built here at home using local expertise. We are hoping that will help reduce cost," said Malinga.

South Africa joins Nigeria, Algeria and Egypt among African countries which already have active space agencies.

According to the ministry, [South Africa](#) had primarily been a consumer and a net importer of [space](#) technologies.

"There is a need to develop systems and sub-systems to support our requirements and to grow the local industry," the ministry said in a statement.

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