

Iran to put a monkey into space: report

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A picture released by Iranian Defence Ministry shows the Saffir (Ambassador) rocket carrying Iran's Rassad-1 (Observation-1) satellite ready to launch into space, putting it in orbit 260 kms (163 miles) above the Earth on June 15. Iran plans to send a live monkey into space in the summer, the country's top space official said after the launch of Rassad-1, state television reported on its website.

Iran plans to send a live monkey into space in the summer, the country's top space official said after the launch of the Rassad-1 satellite, state television reported on its website on Thursday.

"The Kavoshgar-5 rocket will be launched during the month of Mordad (July 23 to August 23) with a 285-kilogramme capsule carrying a monkey to an altitude of 120 kilometres (74 miles)," said Hamid Fazeli, head of Iran's [Space](#) Organisation.

In February, President [Mahmoud Ahmadinejad](#) unveiled a [space capsule](#) designed to carry a live monkey into space, along with four new

prototypes of home-built satellites the country hopes to launch before March 2012.

At the time, Fazeli touted the launch of a large animal into space as the first step towards sending a man into space, which Tehran says is scheduled for 2020.

Iran sent small animals into space -- a rat, turtles and worms -- aboard its Kavoshgar-3 rocket in 2010.

Fazeli also announced plans for the launch in October of the Fajr reconnaissance [satellite](#) with "a life span of a year and a half, and to be placed at an altitude of 400 kilometres," the website reported.

On Wednesday, the Islamic republic successfully put its Rassad-1 (Observation-1) satellite into orbit 260 kilometres above the Earth.

Rassad-1, which orbits the Earth 15 times every 24 hours and has a two-month life cycle, will be used to photograph the planet and transmit images, media reports said.

Originally scheduled to [launch](#) in August 2010, the satellite was built by Malek Ashtar University in Tehran, which is linked to Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards.

Iran, which first put a satellite into orbit in 2009, has outlined an ambitious space programme amid Western concerns.

Western powers fear that Iran's space agenda might be linked to developing a [ballistic missile](#) capability that could deliver nuclear warheads.

But Tehran has repeatedly denied that its contentious nuclear and

scientific programmes mask military ambitions.

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