

Establishment of SA space agency a step closer

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President Kgalema Motlanthe on Thursday signed a Bill that will see the country set up its own space agency, the Department of Science and Technology said.

Spokesperson Nhlanhla Nyide said an Act could see the country pull together all space-related activities under one banner later this year.

"The agency will oversee development of space missions, develop technology platforms and acquire, assimilate and disseminate space satellite data for any organ of state," he said.

The agency was approved by Cabinet in December 2008 to stimulate the country's capabilities among leading nations in the innovative utilisation of space science and technology.

"The project is expected to boost the economy and create more jobs. The first step towards its establishment will be to appointment a board of 10 to 15 members, a CEO who is an ex-officio member, and a chairperson appointed by the minister of science and technology."

Some of the projects it will coordinate include the Square Kilometre Array bid, the Southern African Large Telescope, and the launch of South Africa's second indigenous satellite, Sumbandilasat. -- Sapa

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