



US Deputy Chief of Mission to Thailand Peter Haymond, left, Director of Sales and Outreach for the USSRC Tom White, second left, and USSRC Ambassador Krit Kunplin, right, present a scholarship programme to Thai students to become Nasa astronauts yesterday.

Mars mission beckons three Thai students

US SCHOLARSHIP OFFERS THREE TEENAGERS THE CHANCE TO JOIN SPACE PROGRAMME IN 15 YEARS

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THE NATION

THE COUNTDOWN began yesterday for three Thai students to have the opportunity to be astronauts on the first manned Mars exploration mission in around 15 years.

The US embassy announced details of the Discover Thailand Astronaut Scholarship Programme at its official launch by the US Space and Rocket Centre (USSRC) in Bangkok's CentralWorld.

US Deputy Chief of Mission to Thailand Peter Haymond said they were looking

for motivated students between the ages of 14 and 18 with "a passion for space exploration" and a fair knowledge of STEM education (science, technology, engineering and mathematics).

"They will study the short, intensive course at USSRC about the space programme, so they will have a chance to fulfil their dream of being a real astronaut," he explained.

"In this programme, Thai students will have a chance to study and meet with the similar young and motivated students from all over Asia."

USSRC sales and outreach director Tom White said these students are part of the Mars generation because they will be on the fully prepared for the first human exploration mission to the Red Planet, which is projected to hap-

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pen around 15 years from now.

"The teenagers aged between 14 and 18 will be around 30 years old when mankind's first journey to Mars begins around 2030 to 2040, and the children from Thailand today may be among the astronauts who will on that first mission to Mars," White said.

Thai students interested in the scholarship can apply from now until October 14. The three eventually selected will have a chance to study for 10 days under the Advanced Space Academy Programme at USSRC headquarters at Huntsville, Alabama.

As part of the course, students will be taught topics relating to current space programmes, the Space Launch System (SLS), and the mission to colonise Mars. They will also

be trained on equipment adapted from Nasa's astronaut training programme and learn about the missions to the International Space Station as well as mission control.

USSRC ambassador Krit Kunplin said that scholarship awardees would also be eligible to study at any faculty of King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang (KMITL). If they excel there, they can also apply to study at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology near Boston.

"This scholarship is not only opening the opportunity for students to be astronauts, but if they have other talents they also have a chance to pursue their dream as well," Krit said.

All scholarship applicants will have to pass a Space Camp Attitude Test, which will comprise 100 multiple-choice questions about STEM in English. The 20 highest-scoring applicants will advance to the final round at the STEM Camp in KMITL for three days. The top three finalists will be awarded the scholarship.