

Israeli Group Shoots For the Moon

The Space IL organization has set an ambitious goal for itself—to send an Israeli spaceprobe to the moon in 2015. The project received significant backing this week when the Bezeq telecommunications company announced it had signed on.

Bezeq will provide the advanced communications infrastructure needed for the spaceflight and also support Space IL's educational activities.

The vessel will weigh less than 140 kilograms (308 pounds), making it the smallest spacecraft ever to land on the moon.

Space IL hopes the project will demonstrate ground-breaking technological capabilities in the field of building miniature smart spacecraft, which cost about a tenth of typical spacecraft.

Bezeq will be responsible for the probe's transmissions from the moon to a control center in the city of Yehud, in central Israel.

"This remarkable cooperation will enable us to meet the tremendous technological challenge and inspire the young generation," Space IL chairman Yanki Margalit said of Bezeq's support.

Space IL is a non-profit group set up by Israeli space enthusiasts to take part in the international Google Lunar X PRIZE competition. According to the Google Lunar X PRIZE website, a \$30 million prize will be given to the first privately funded team that lands a robot on the moon, has the robot travel 500 meters on the lunar surface and sends back video, images and other data to Earth.

"We are motivated by a mission: to reinvigorate the Israeli start-up nation by undertaking a challenging task that will ignite the imagination of the country's young generation," Space IL's website says. "Driven by a national mission to advance Israel's scientific and technological fields, Space IL is determined to push ingenuity further than ever before."

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