

# Turkmenistan Forms Space Agency

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ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan — The energy-rich Turkmenistan is aiming to join the ranks of space nations.

The official newspaper Neutral Turkmenistan reported Tuesday that President Gurbanguli Berdimukhammedov has signed a decree authorizing the creation of the National Space Agency.

Earlier this month, U.S. space transportation company SpaceX vice president Christophe Bauer announced that his company would launch a satellite for the Central Asian nation in 2014.

The country's last brush with space came in 2005, when the Turkmens secured a slot on a Russian rocket to send a capsule containing then-President Saparmurat Niyazov's self-penned holy text into orbit.

The eccentric leader died in 2006 after two decades of iron-fisted rule.

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