

# Research Milestone in Space

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On March 18, Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata arrived at the International Space Station by U.S. Space Shuttle Discovery. He is scheduled to stay at the ISS until the end of June.

Wakata, 45, is the first Japanese to experience an extended stay at the research facility, which is orbiting Earth at an altitude of 400 kilometers. Last year, another Japanese astronaut

helped attach the Kibo laboratory module to the ISS. With these developments, Japan's manned space activity has now entered a new stage of evolving the possibility.

Kuniaki Shiraki, director of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, said, "It's a wonderful day for Japan which has been participating in the space station plan since the 80s."

Wakata will live at ISS with U.S. and Russian




*Japanese astronaut Koichi Wakata, who is on an extended stay in space aboard the International Space Station, speaks via a live connection with Japanese youth.  
Photo JAXA*

astronauts and will be joined by another three astronauts in May. During his 15-week stay, he will help with a zero-gravity experiment and provide his own data for study on the influence of life in space. He is scheduled to return to Earth at the end of June after completing the Kibo laboratory module by connecting a facility to it for experiments outside the space station.

In his communications with Earth, Wakata

said, "I am very busy with my mission and there are a lot of things to learn...but I am enjoying every moment at the space station."

He also said he is looking forward to eating 28 items of Japanese space food with his colleagues.

 On the Internet

[http://www.nasa.gov/mission\\_pages/station/main/](http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/station/main/)