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Akihiko Hoshide displaying the welcome message in Japanese and English after entering Kibo NASA TV

[ISS Toilet Back in Business](#)

Astronauts enter the second section of Kibo

After the arrival of the space shuttle Discovery at the International Space Station on Monday, astronauts began making preparations for the docking of the new Japanese space module Kibo and for the repair of the faulty toilet that has been haunting the crew of the space station for the last two weeks or so. On Wednesday they opened up the second section of the mammoth laboratory and at the same time finished fixing the only toilet on the space outpost. The problems with the toilet began when its pump started functioning intermittently, forcing the crew to use the one on the Soyuz-TMA-12 capsule. However, since this toilet had limited capacity, astronauts on board the space station had to start using the faulty one again by manually flushing it, a time and water consuming operation while very unpleasant at the same time. In order to fix the problem once and for all, NASA had to immediately fly a spare pump all the way from Moscow to Cape Canaveral and load it on board the Discovery shuttle. After replacing the pump yesterday, Oleg Kononenko, the Russian flight engineer of Expedition 17, reported that the toilet was again functioning correctly, thus solving the disagreeable problem on the ISS. "Let's start using it. We'll keep our fingers crossed", said the Russian Mission Control to Kononenko. Just in case you haven't noticed, the faulty toilet on board the space station seemed to draw more attention during mission STS-124 than the delivery of the massive space laboratory Kibo and things were no different at NASA's news conferences, with officials having to give up details about how a toilet works in zero gravity. "It's unfortunate we're talking about toilets, but that really is the life, that's the future of human exploration in space. I don't take it as a really bad thing. It's just something perhaps everyday people can really relate to", said Kirk Shireman, deputy space station program manager. JAXA's two billion dollar module was also opened yesterday, after being docked to the ISS the day before. "This is a great moment for the Japanese folks. It's been like 20-plus years to get this module up in space", said Akihiko Hoshide, the Japanese astronaut part of mission STS-124. After entering the laboratory, Hoshide said that "it looks really empty, but it's full of dreams". Kibo, meaning hope in Japanese, is the latest addition to the ISS and currently the biggest module attached to the space station, surpassing NASA's and the ESA's own modules by more than 2.7 meters in length. The third and final section of the laboratory is expected to fly into space early next year along with the experiments, marking the beginning of the scientific investigations on board the Japanese module. The scheduled spacewalk for today will see the installation of the TV cameras outside Kibo and the removal of the covers protecting the robotic arm of the laboratory. The ISS now weighs some 272,000 kilograms and is three-quarters completed, while the built is expected to be finished by 2010, when the US space shuttle will be put out of service.