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Moskovsky Komsomolets

Mars mission: The ultimate experience

On February 12, the Moscow-based Institute of Biomedical Problems will conduct a simulated landing on Mars as part of the unique Mars-500 experiment simulating a manned flight to the red planet.

Russian physiologist Alexander Smoleyevesky, Italian-Colombian engineer Diego Urbina and Chinese professional astronaut Wang Yue will all get to experience what "landing" on Mars would be like.

Mission commander Alexei Sitev, Russian surgeon Sukhrob Kamolov and French engineer Romain Charles will remain on board the spacecraft, which is to spend some time orbiting Mars.

The "landing" crew will make a total of three trips to the mock-up of the planet's surface in a special module. Their tasks will include studying the planet's surface and collecting soil and rock samples for subsequent study back on Earth.

The descent module is due to touch down on the 255th day of the mission. The "interplanetary vessel" is currently over 65 million km from Earth, and can already feel Mars' gravitational pull.

The Institute's experts have recently updated a 3D online tour of the Mars-500 spacecraft, providing access to the central control console, the EU-50 landing module, the space-suit compartment and a simulation of the Martian surface.

Nezavisimaya Gazeta

African swine fever hits St. Petersburg farms

The threat of an African swine fever epidemic among livestock in St. Petersburg has given a scare to the top city hall officials. Governor Valentina Matviyenko ordered the agencies concerned to deal with the problem in the most drastic way: to slaughter all pigs in the areas where outbreaks of the virus have been recorded.

The first swine fever cases were registered during the Christmas break. Three districts of the region were immediately put under quarantine to contain the spread of the highly contagious virus: all exports of livestock or animal products were banned. People were allowed to travel, however, as swine fever does not affect humans except by causing economic damage: pork prices are bound to surge.

In fact, the problem may be more serious than it seems because the virus spreads fast and usually kills infected animals.

Once the first cases were registered, local authorities began an investigation to find out the source of the infection. St. Petersburg chief veterinary doctor Yury Andreyev said the virus

probably came from contaminated food waste. The potential perpetrators will face administrative or even criminal charges, he said.

The city authorities have made it their priority to prevent the further spread of the virus. Since there is no vaccine available, the drastic measures proposed by the governor are probably the only possible solution. She ordered to slaughter all pigs and destroy animal products in areas where swine fever cases were registered.

The order will affect around 1,200 pigs, said Deputy Governor Lyudmila Kostkina, who is supervising the process. To keep the affected farms afloat, City Hall will pay them compensation of about \$2.5 per kilo of each slaughtered animal's weight, a total of 10 million rubles (\$330,000).

So far, the quarantine has successfully contained the spread of the virus, and analysts do not expect a sharp rise in pork prices. In fact, most of the meat is supplied to St. Petersburg from other regions. However, if the problem is not resolved soon, meat suppliers may hike wholesale prices on the back of epidemic concerns.

Rossiiskaya Gazeta

Measuring up Russia's newest profession: Cadastral engineers

Anyone who has had to draw up paperwork for a house, summer cottage or plot of land knows that land surveying is key. A new profession, that of cadastral engineer, has now appeared in Russia which should mean the surveying process will become more understandable, quicker and less costly. In this *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* interview, Galina Yelizarova, deputy head of the Federal Service for State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography (Rosreestr), describes what their remit will be.

RG: Russia's institution of cadastral engineers started work on January 1, 2011. What was the thinking behind this move? And does this mean that land surveying will be now less expensive for ordinary people?

Galina Yelizarova: The federal law On State Real Estate Cadastre introduces a whole new concept, that of the cadastral engineer. These are qualified people who can either work in businesses or as independent entrepreneurs. There is no geographical limitation on their activity. Someone who graduates in, say, the Moscow Region, is free to find work anywhere in Russia.

Cadastral engineers can also set up non-profit partnerships to establish a uniform code governing their work.

RG: Now to the cost. How is the price set?

Galina Yelizarova: The volume of work is detailed in a contract between the cadastral engineer and the individual concerned. They determine the price, producing solid estimates, which become mandatory once the client agrees them.

To make the whole process cheaper, the law allows limits on regional rates, tariffs and fees for cadastral work.

RG: Who can become a cadastral engineer?

Galina Yelizarova: Anyone can, so long as they have qualified as a cadastral engineer and have the required certificate. They need to hold Russian citizenship, and have higher or specialized secondary education. People with unpardoned convictions for premeditated crimes will be barred.

RG: Anybody with surveying experience will know how difficult calling in a land specialist is. Will there be enough cadastral engineers?

Galina Yelizarova: By year-end, we had received 11,000 applications, and over 5,000 specialists have taken the exams.

RG: Land surveying is not a low-paid profession. Could high demand result in a mushrooming of phony experts?

Galina Yelizarova: Under cadastral law, a qualification certificate confirms the individual's authority to practice their profession, once an entry has been made in the state register of cadastral engineers, they are fully authorized to work.

RG: How can an ordinary member of the public hire these experts?

Galina Yelizarova: There are currently 1,189 registered cadastral engineers. The register is posted on Rosreestr's website, includes their telephone numbers and email addresses and is updated daily.

RG: Who will answer for mistakes should any arise? Who is responsible for oversight?

Galina Yelizarova: The cadastral law does not give Rosreestr supervisory powers over cadastral engineers' work. Where work has been shoddily done, or serious mistakes made, the professional concerned risks being struck off. In any such cases a special letter will be sent to the qualification commission, suggesting their certificate be annulled.

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