

No inclination to homosexuality found in Mars-500 experiment participants - deputy project head

ZHUKOVSKY, Moscow region. Aug 20 (Interfax-AVN) - The participants in the Mars-500 ground-based experiment simulating a manned flight to Mars and back did not manifest any inclination toward homosexuality, Mark Belakovsky, a deputy director of the Mars-500 project, told journalists at the MAKS-2011 international air show in Zhukovsky.

"There was nothing indicating any odd inclinations either in the [participants'] thoughts or behavior," Belakovsky said.

The Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medical and Biological Problems very carefully selected the participants in the Mars-500 project, he said.

As of August 19, 2011 the six men participating in the experiment had stayed on board a facility isolated from the outer world for 443 days.

The experiment was started on June 3, 2010. The international crew is comprised of three Russian participants (Alexei Sityov, an engineer and the mission commander, Sukhrob Kamolov, a surgeon, and Alexander Smolejevsky, a physiologist), Frenchman Romain Charles, an engineer, Italian Diego Urbina, an engineer, and Chinese Wang Yue, an instructor at a Chinese astronaut training center.

The experiment consists of three stages, i.e. the flight from Earth to Mars, the stay on Martian surface, and the flight back to Earth. The experiment is nearing its completion now.

During the mission, the participants have carried out three simulated landings onto Martian surface, during which they took soil and rock samples, practiced the handling of an injury sustained by a participant, and found a magnet in the shape of an animal bone.

The mission should be completed on November 5, 2011.

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