

Muslims in Space! Muslim Astronauts Encounter Unique Difficulties

As Malaysia prepares to pick its first astronauts, the country's space agency is hunting for solutions to the problems it expects devout Muslims to face while in orbit, such as in which direction to pray.

Devout Muslims are required under Islam rules to pray fervently five times a day facing their holy city of Mecca. Mecca is the birthplace of Islam and of Muhammad, the founder of Islam. It is therefore the most sacred of cities in both Islam and the middle east. According to Islamic traditions, Muslims around the world must face Mecca during their daily prayers. The question that must be answered is how Astronauts aboard spaceships determine which way to pray. How do you correctly pray and face Mecca?.

"Among the astronaut's needs, if he is a Muslim, are guidelines on performing prayers in space, and other aspects of life according to Islamic principles," Malaysian government official Mohd Ruddin Abdul Ghani.

Malaysia is currently in their astronaut candidate selection process. They will soon begin astronaut training for a near future trip (Oct. 2007) in conjunction with Russia . The trip will be made aboard a Soyuz spacecraft and is part of a major arms agreement/purchase between the two countries.

The trip was the deal maker for a \$900-million deal for Russian fighter jets. The Malaysian astronauts will spend a week aboard the International Space Station amongst other activities and learn from Russian astronauts. Rumor has it there could also be a satellite launched with an as of yet unknown purpose - Islamic satellite programming?

This is all apart of Malaysia's recent strides in increasing science and technology programs and research. "We want the world to know that Malaysia has great capabilities, knowledge, education and resources for the future." Stated Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. We will not only be known for low cost manufacture, but also for high quality and cutting edge research both chemical and technical. Malaysia is gearing up and getting ready for the future.

About the Author

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