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Space & Astronomy:

Celestial Events and Sky Watching

Mars and Spica Alignment: On this day, Mars will pass due north of the star Spica in the constellation Virgo. The two will appear in close proximity and will be visible in the western sky shortly after sunset, although you'll need a clear horizon to spot them.

Lunar Occultation: The waning gibbous Moon will pass close to the planet Uranus. This is also significant because, a few hours earlier, the Moon occulted (passed in front of) several stars in the Pleiades star cluster, an event visible from parts of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

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Comet Wierzchoś: Observers with telescopes can look for Comet C/2024 E1 Wierzchoś as it moves through the constellation Corona Borealis, offering a chance to spot this faint celestial visitor.

Planetary Visibility: Jupiter and Venus are currently visible in the morning sky. Venus, in particular, shines brilliantly and is hard to miss.

Ongoing Missions and Discoveries

NASA's Perseverance Rover: NASA has revealed a new finding from its Perseverance rover on Mars. The rover has discovered sedimentary rock formations in the Jezero Crater that contain potential "biosignatures." These are mineral patterns and organic compounds that, on Earth, are associated with life-like chemical activity. While not definitive proof of life, this discovery suggests that Mars may have been habitable for a longer period than previously thought.

Artemis II Mission: NASA is offering the public the chance to have their names flown on the Artemis II mission. This will be the first crewed flight around the Moon in over 50 years. The names will be stored on a memory card aboard the Orion spacecraft, which is scheduled for launch no later than April 2026.

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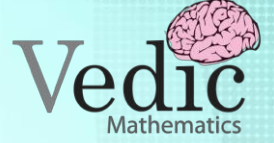
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MCQS

1. What celestial event involving the Moon is mentioned as occurring just a few hours before the Moon's close pass with Uranus?

- A) The Moon occulted the planet Mars.
- B) The Moon occulted several stars in the Pleiades star cluster.
- C) The Moon passed in front of the planet Venus.
- D) The Moon entered the Earth's umbra, causing a lunar eclipse.

Answer: B

The text explicitly states that a few hours before the Moon passed close to Uranus, it "occulted (passed in front of) several stars in the Pleiades star cluster." This event was visible from parts of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

2. Where did NASA's Perseverance rover discover sedimentary rock formations with potential "biosignatures"?

- A) Valles Marineris
- B) Jezero Crater
- C) Olympus Mons
- D) Gale Crater

Answer: B

The article specifies that the Perseverance rover "has discovered sedimentary rock formations in the Jezero Crater that contain potential 'biosignatures.'"

3. What is the significance of the "biosignatures" found by the Perseverance rover on Mars?

- A) They are definitive proof of current life on Mars.
- B) They are definitive proof of ancient life on Mars.
- C) They suggest Mars may have been habitable for a longer period than previously thought.

D) They are a new type of organic compound previously unknown to science.

Answer: C

The text notes that while the biosignatures are "not definitive proof of life," the discovery "suggests that Mars may have been habitable for a longer period than previously thought."

4. What is the celestial event involving the planet Mars that is mentioned in the text?

- A) Mars will be occulted by the Moon.
- B) Mars will pass due north of the star Spica.
- C) Mars will be visible in the morning sky with Venus.
- D) A meteor shower will be visible originating from Mars.

Answer: B

The text states, "Mars will pass due north of the star Spica in the constellation Virgo. The two will appear in close proximity and will be visible in the western sky shortly after sunset."

5. Which of the following planets is described as shining brilliantly and being hard to miss in the morning sky?

- A) Mars
- B) Jupiter
- C) Venus
- D) Uranus

Answer: C

The "Planetary Visibility" section mentions that "Jupiter and Venus are currently visible in the morning sky. Venus, in particular, shines brilliantly and is hard to miss."





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