Beat: Health

Newly-discovered asteroid to approach Earth in 2032

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USPA News - A big asteroid that flew past Earth last month but went unnoticed for more than three weeks is expected to return for a much closer approach in 19 years, but a preliminary calculation of its future path shows an impact is highly unlikely, the U.S. space agency said on Friday. The asteroid, called 2013 TV135 and estimated to be about 1,300 feet (400 meters) in size, came within about 4.2 million miles (6.7 million kilometers) of Earth on September 16, but it went unnoticed until October 8 when it was spotted by astronomers working at the Crimean Astrophysical Observatory in Ukraine.

With only a week of observations for an orbital period that spans almost four years, astronomers are still uncertain about its future path that could bring it even closer to Earth. However, NASA`s Near-Earth Object Program Office has calculated the probability of 2013 TV135 impacting Earth to be only 1 in 63,.000. "To put it another way, that puts the current probability of no impact in 2032 at about 99.998 percent," said Don Yeomans, manager of the Near-Earth Object Program Office. "This is a relatively new discovery. With more observations, I fully expect we will be able to significantly reduce, or rule out entirely, any impact probability for the foreseeable future." NASA detects, tracks and characterizes asteroids and comets passing close to Earth using both ground- and space-based telescopes. The office, commonly called "Spaceguard," will use these telescopes to improve the initial orbit calculations for 2013 TV135 to determine the asteroid`s future path and further downgrade any risk of Earth impact. There have been calls for improved asteroid detection since February when an asteroid measuring about 17 to 20 meters (55.7 to 65.6 feet) in size entered Earth`s atmosphere undetected and streaked through the skies over central Russia before exploding in an air burst, damaging more than 7,.000 buildings across the region and injuring nearly 1,500 people. The meteor was the largest known object to have entered Earth`s atmosphere since June 1908 when a suspected air burst of a small asteroid or comet flattened some 80 million trees over approximately 2,150 square kilometers (830 square miles) of forest in the Krasnoyarsk Krai region of Russia. There were no casualties as the area is uninhabited, but the asteroid could have destroyed a large metropolitan area if it struck elsewhere.

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