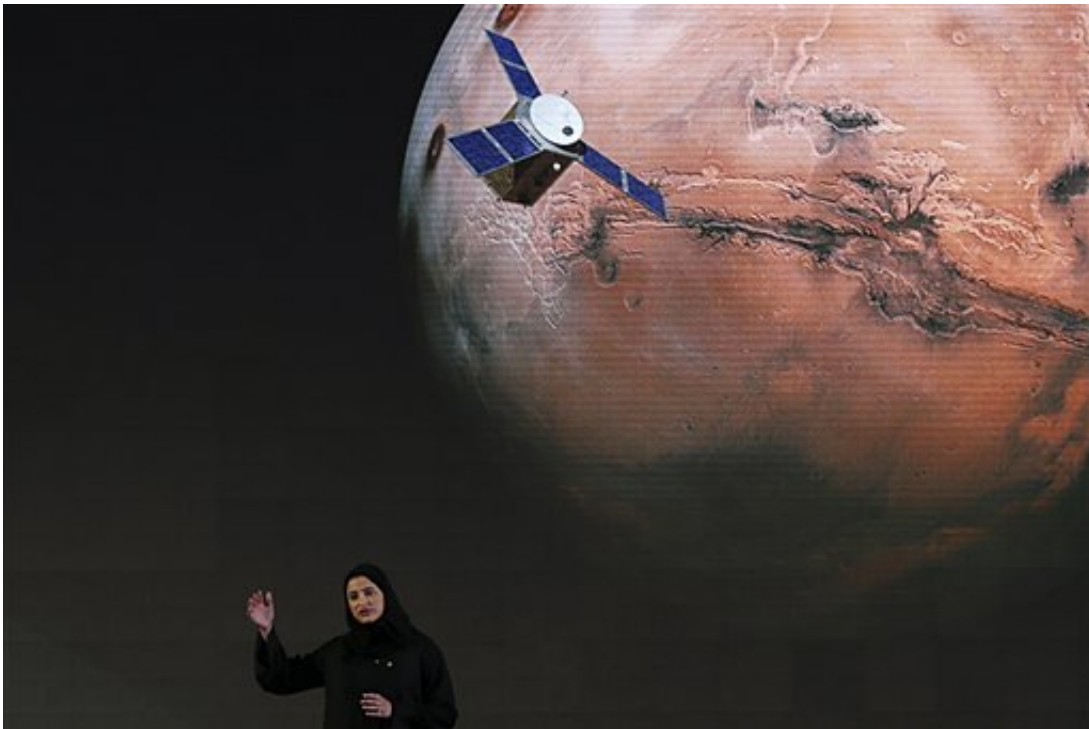


UAE to explore Mars' atmosphere with probe named 'Hope' (Update)

May 6 2015, by Adam Schreck



Sarah Amiri, Deputy Project Manager of a planned United Arab Emirates Mars mission talks about the project named "Hope"—or "al-Amal" in Arabic—which is scheduled be launched in 2020, during a ceremony in Dubai, UAE, Wednesday, May 6, 2015. It would be the Arab world's first space probe to Mars and will take seven to nine months to reach the red planet, arriving in 2021. Emirati scientists hope the unmanned probe will provide a deeper understanding of the Martian atmosphere, and expect it to remain in orbit until at least 2023. (AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili)

The United Arab Emirates' planned 2020 mission to Mars will study the planet's atmosphere and be appropriately named "Hope," members of the project team revealed Wednesday.

Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum announced initial plans for the unmanned probe last year. It is the first Mars mission attempted anywhere in the Arab world.

An invitation-only event Wednesday in Dubai was a chance for officials to unveil many of the finer details. And they did it with a good dose of Gulf flair—soaring music and computer animations projected onto a movie screen in a chandelier-filled beachside palace. One of the world's largest yachts, Dubai, was berthed outside.

"This mission to Mars is really for the hope of the Arab world and will send them a message to say you can be better, you can improve your country," Sheikh Mohammed, who is also the Emirates' vice president and prime minister, told reporters after the event.

Emirati scientists said they hope the probe, which will not land on the surface of the red planet, will provide a deeper understanding of the Martian atmosphere. That includes charting changes that happen over time and gathering data on how features such as volcanoes, deserts and canyons affect it.

The plan is to launch the probe in the summer of 2020—the year Dubai hosts the World Expo—on a journey of seven to nine months. Engineers expect it to remain in orbit until at least 2023.

Some 75 engineers are working on the project, a number that is expected to double by 2020. The project is fully staffed by Emiratis—a rarity in a country where guest workers and other foreigners outnumber locals more than four to one.



Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum talks to journalists after announcing a UAE Mars mission named "Hope"—or "al-Amal" in Arabic—which is scheduled to be launched in 2020, during a ceremony in Dubai, Wednesday, May 6, 2015. It would be the Arab world's first space probe to Mars and will take seven to nine months to reach the red planet, arriving in 2021. Emirati scientists hope the unmanned probe will provide a deeper understanding of the Martian atmosphere, and expect it to remain in orbit until at least 2023. (AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili)

"This is an important project because of the legacy that this project leaves ... to develop the science and technology sector," deputy project manager Sarah Amiri said.

Officials haven't said how much it will cost.



Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, center, talks to Emirati officials after announcing a UAE Mars mission named "Hope"—or "al-Amal" in Arabic—which is scheduled to be launched in 2020, during a ceremony in Dubai, Wednesday, May 6, 2015. It would be the Arab world's first space probe to Mars and will take seven to nine months to reach the red planet, arriving in 2021. Emirati scientists hope the unmanned probe will provide a deeper understanding of the Martian atmosphere, and expect it to remain in orbit until at least 2023. (AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili)



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Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, center, announces a United Arab Emirates' Mars mission named "Hope"—or "al-Amal" in Arabic—which is scheduled to be launched in 2020, during a ceremony in Dubai, UAE, Wednesday, May 6, 2015. It would be the Arab world's first space probe to Mars and will take seven to nine months to reach the red planet, arriving in 2021. Emirati scientists hope the unmanned probe will provide a deeper understanding of the Martian atmosphere, and expect it to remain in orbit until at least 2023. (AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili)

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