

Bad weather may delay 1st UAE Mars mission on Japan rocket

July 13 2020, by Mari Yamaguchi



In this image made from video released by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, project manager Omran Sharaf speaks during a pre-launch video briefing of a Mars orbiter, Monday, July 13, 2020. The United Arab Emirates is up first with the Martian orbiter set to launch from Japan on Wednesday, July 15. The liftoff of the Mars orbiter named Amal, or Hope, from Japan marked the start of a rush to fly to Earth's neighbor. (Mitsubishi Heavy Industries via AP)

Final preparations for the launch from Japan of the United Arab Emirates' first Mars mission were underway Monday, but there was a chance of a delay because of bad weather, a Japanese rocket provider said.

The liftoff of the UAE's Mars orbiter named Amal, or Hope, on a Japanese H-IIA rocket is scheduled for early Wednesday from the Tanegashima Space Center in southern Japan, in what would be the Arab world's first interplanetary [mission](#).

A final decision will be made Tuesday before the roll out of the rocket, said Keiji Suzuki, launch site director for Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

A seasonal rain front was expected to cause intermittent lightning and rain over the next few days, he said.

"But this thunder is not expected to be severe or lasting, and our assessment is that there will be a chance for a launch," Suzuki told an online briefing Monday from Tanegashima. "We will make a careful decision based on data."

Heavy rain has continued for more than a week in large areas of Japan, triggering mudslides and floods and killing more than 70 people, most of them on the southern main island of Kyushu.

Hope is set to reach Mars in February 2021, the year the UAE celebrates 50 years since its formation. A successful Hope mission would be a major step for the oil-dependent economy seeking a future in space.



In this image made from video released by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Keiji Suzuki, director of Mitsubishi Launch Site Service Team of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, speaks during a pre-launch video briefing of a Mars orbiter, Monday, July 13, 2020. The United Arab Emirates is up first with the Martian orbiter set to launch from Japan on Wednesday, July 15. The liftoff of the Mars orbiter named Amal, or Hope, from Japan marked the start of a rush to fly to Earth's neighbor. (Mitsubishi Heavy Industries via AP)



In this image made from video released by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, project manager Omran Sharaf, left, and Keiji Suzuki of Japan's Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, attend a pre-launch video briefing of a Mars orbiter, Monday, July 13, 2020. The United Arab Emirates is up first with the Martian orbiter set to launch from Japan on Wednesday, July 15. The liftoff of the Mars orbiter named Amal, or Hope, from Japan marked the start of a rush to fly to Earth's neighbor. (Mitsubishi Heavy Industries via AP)

Hope carries three instruments to study the [upper atmosphere](#) and monitor climate change and is scheduled to circle the red planet for at least two years.

Emirates Mars Mission Project Director Omran Sharaf, who joined Monday's briefing from Dubai, said the mission is not just a repeat of

what other countries have done. It will provide a complete view of the Martian atmosphere during different seasons for the first time, he said.

Two other Mars missions are planned in coming days by the U.S. and China. Japan has its own Martian moon mission planned in 2024.

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