



NATION | P6

## Students back to school as attendance sees spike

Some schools see near perfect strength on first day after break



TABLOID | P4-5

## Mortal Kombat on big screen

Sprawling legacy behind new cinematic adaptation of the iconic video game



MIDDLE EAST | P12

## Jordan's royals mark centenary

Hamzah Joins Abdullah on visit to King Hussain's tomb

## GULF NEWS

### Exploring the new frontier of space

UAE leads the region in developing personnel and missions to explore beyond Earth

**T**hese are exciting times for everyone living in the UAE and most certainly indeed for anyone involved in this nation's space programme. Millions of kilometres away, far from home, the Hope orbiter has been going about its work, mapping the surface of Mars and adding to our understanding of the Red Planet with each passing hour, every image, every sweep of the surface and every data dump back to eager and excited officials at mission control in the US and here at the Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) base.

But far closer to home – in planetary terms at least – this is an exciting time also for our astronaut programme. Already, one adventurer from the UAE has shaken off the surly bonds of Earth and looked back down on our wonderful blue planet from the International Space Station (ISS). And now the MBRSC is preparing to train and oversee the deployment of two more UAE astronauts, confirming this nation's leading role in space exploration in the Middle East and underlining the leadership's commitment to being at the vanguard of developing and rolling out the personnel and technologies that will bring exciting changes and challenges in the years to come.

The announcement of two new Emirati astronauts was tweeted by His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai on Saturday – and what an exciting development it indeed is.

"We announce the first Arab female astronaut, among two new astronauts, selected from over 4,000 candidates to be trained with Nasa for future space exploration missions. Congratulations Noura Al Matrooshi and Mohammed Al Mulla," Shaikh Mohammad tweeted. The two new astronauts join astronauts Hazzaa Al Mansoori and Sultan Al Neyadi in our team of space explorers.

The choice of Al Matrooshi is particularly noteworthy given that in many nations, women struggle to be seen and fail to enjoy the same legal rights and opportunities as are enshrined in our laws and society.

The two will join the 2021 Nasa Astronaut Candidate and will be trained in human spaceflight, research and space flight control. There are many other aspects they must master – learning Russian is but one practical element in a highly technical programme that will challenge their resolve and abilities as never before. But the two can also take solace from knowing they enjoy this nation's full support. Never have we stopped reaching for the stars.