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Focus on Woody Allen abuse accusations

Allen v. Farrow examines claim that he molested his daughter



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Meet the man behind Hope Probe

Mars mission chief Omran Sharaf shares his professional and personal insights

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Dubai Hindu temple to be closed on Shivratri

Devotees urged not to visit complex to prevent virus spread

EXCLUSIVE

DUBAI
BY ANGEL TESORERO
Senior Reporter

His was the voice that announced to the world that Hope Probe, the first Arab interplanetary mission, successfully entered Mars orbit on February 9. He has worked on the mission since its inception in 2014 and his calm demeanour has been a constant presence inside the mission control centre.

His name is Omeran Sharaf, project director of the Emirates Mars Mission (EMM) at the Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC). He and his team are responsible for developing, launching and operating Hope Probe. He leads a team of young Emirati engineers, scientists, data analysts and programmers – all under 35 years old – and they have made history in putting a young nation like the UAE as the first Arab country and only the fifth in the world to reach the Red Planet.

In an exclusive interview, Sharaf shared the mood of the team during the crucial Mars orbit insertion (MOI); the moment they received the first photo of Mars; what's next for Hope Probe; how the mission has created a powerful impact on the youth; future space missions; as well as his personal journey and transformation.

Pride, happiness and positivity

Recalling the historic moment on February 9, Sharaf said it was a day “full of pride, happiness and positivity. Yes, it was a very busy, intense and stressful day; but personally, I was confident about the teamwork and spacecraft design.”

Worried, scared, but confident – it was definitely a mixed feeling for Sharaf and his team who have reached that point – the farthest that any Arab would go in the universe. The MOI was very critical. They only had one shot and with only 50 per cent success rate – it could go either way: failure or accomplishment.

The MOI commenced at 7.30pm (UAE time). At 8.08pm, the ground control station at Al Khawanej received the first transmission from Hope Probe and Sharaf confirmed to the UAE and the world the success of the mission. Sharaf told *Gulf News*: “After we arrived, the stress went away. The feeling was very difficult to describe. For the first few minutes, I was still in shock. The past seven years (from Hope Probe announcement in 2014), went really fast in front of me. It took me a while to realise our feat and it was a good feeling.”

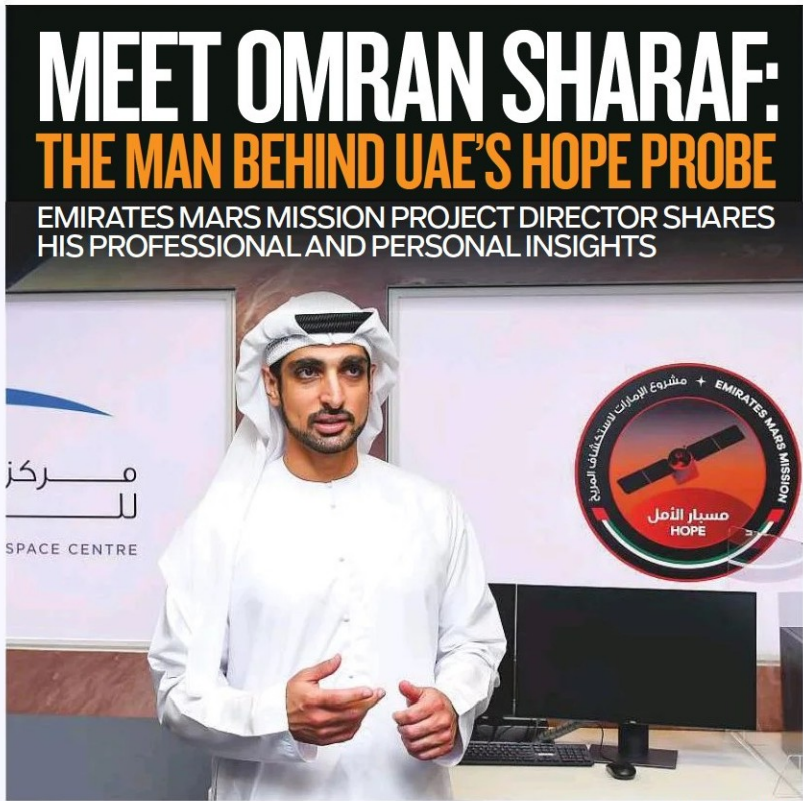
Stamp of success

On February 14, Hope Probe sent a composite image capturing Olympus Mons, the largest volcano in the solar system, emerging into the early morning sunlight on Mars.

Sharaf said: “Receiving the first photo taken by Hope Probe was like a stamp of completing our successful entry to Mars. Before that, we only received data, numbers and telemetries to verify we are around Mars. When we saw the photo, it was really a good feeling to see something in front of you rather than numbers and telemetries. We processed the image to show how as humans we could see Mars with our naked eyes at 25,000km above the Red Planet.”

Benefit for humanity

The international media and scientific community have hailed the UAE's success story – how a country with



Omeran Sharaf, project director of the Emirates Mars Mission (EMM) at the Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC), has worked on the programme since 2014.



HOPE FOR HUMANITY

A recurring theme within the Emirates Mars Mission (EMM) is not just about sending a probe to Mars but bringing greater hope for the region by inspiring and empowering the Arab youth in the fields of science and technology. In fact, the EMM has directly reached out to over 60,000 young people and teachers through various scientific and academic outreach programmes.

The spacecraft's mission is to explore the atmosphere of Mars globally while observing both diurnal (daily) and seasonal timescales.

This has never been done by any previous Mars missions.

WHO IS OMRAN SHARAF?

Omeran Sharaf is the Project Director of Emirates Mars Mission (EMM) at the Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC). He and his team are responsible for developing, launching and operating Hope Probe, the first Arab interplanetary mission.

Sharaf has worked on the project since inception in 2014 and developed all the necessary capabilities and partnerships at MBRSC, effectively transitioning the organisation from one that focused on earth observation satellites to one that develops interplanetary exploration missions.

An experienced electronics and systems engineer who trained in the US and South Korea, he was responsible for developing and implementing the Command & Data Handling Subsystem (C&DH) for DubaiSat-1. He also headed the development of the C&DH subsystem and payload electronics subsystem for DubaiSat-2, along with being a systems engineer of that project.

Prior to EMM, he was director of the Programmes Management Department at MBRSC, and responsible for defining new strategic programmes. He earned his bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Virginia, USA in 2005, and his Master's in Science and Technology Policy from the Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), South Korea in 2013.



Read the full story and watch the video of Omeran Sharaf's interview

450
The number of people who worked on UAE Mars mission

200
The number of Emiratis who worked on the mission

a nascent space agency went straight to Mars.

Sharaf noted: “The reason why the UAE was able to reach Mars in such a short time and with a relatively small budget was because of international collaboration. Around 450 people worked on this mission – 200 are Emiratis and 150 from our academic partners in US and 100 sub-contractors from around the world. The mission proved the importance of collaboration. The direction of the UAE government since Day 1 was

“Don't start from scratch, begin where others ended. Work with others.”

Impact of Mars mission

Sharaf noted: “Big part of the mission was to inspire the Emirati and Arab youth. His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, made it clear to the team that the science objective was very important to the global scientific community. Equally important, however,

was its impact to the youth. And we have seen a shift in the mindset of Emirati youth to embrace space exploration.”

He added: “We have worked with different sectors. In the academia, in particular, we have seen how students have shifted majors from international relations and finance to sciences because of the Emirates Mars Mission programme. We have seen a lot of qualitative impact among the Emirati and Arab youth who have reacted very positively.”

Palestinians hail UAE's move to provide vaccine

Gaza Strip witnessing a deterioration in health sector, activist says

GAZA

Many Palestinians have commended the UAE's move to provide the coronavirus vaccine to the Gaza Strip, in light of the long-imposed blockade that hinder the delivery of Covid-19 vaccines into the Strip.

In a statement to the Emirates News Agency (WAM), Palestinian human rights activist Khalil Abu Shamala said that Gaza Strip is witnessing a deterioration in the health sector, and over the past months, “the sector has faced great difficulties in facing the spread of the coronavirus.”

He stressed that the vaccine delivered from the UAE at this critical time strengthened the work of medical teams and the Ministry of Health and enabled them to deal with emergency cases. “As far as we know, this is the first batch of vaccines, and the UAE will send other

» The vaccine delivered from the UAE at this critical time strengthened the work of medical teams and the Ministry of Health and enabled them to deal with emergency cases.

batches to Gaza Strip,” he added. Abu Shamala praised the UAE's initiative and efforts to support the Palestinian health sector, specifically in light of the siege and severe deprivation in the Strip.

Necessary assistance

Salah Abdel Aty, Head of the International Commission to Support Palestinian Rights, expressed his thanks to the UAE for the medical supplies it has provided at this crucial time. He called on the international community to provide all necessary assistance to the residents of Gaza Strip to confront the coronavirus pandemic and “reinforce the dilapidated health sector.”

— WAM

Automatic accident alert system, eCall, launched

System to notify police command centres in Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI
BY SAMIHAH ZAMAN
Senior Reporter

An electronic in-vehicle system that automatically notifies the Police in case of an accident has been launched in Abu Dhabi.

The eCall system was demonstrated by the Abu Dhabi Police last week – UAE Innovation Week 2021 – as part of a series of innovations it has undertaken.

“The new system accelerates accident response times by automatically providing

accident information to the nearest police command and control rooms in the emirate. It sends vehicle and geographical data, and even automates voice connectivity with traffic officials,” the Police said.

Using the information, traffic officials can reach the site of the accident faster, which can further help reduce the rate of fatalities and ensure prompt provision of emergency services.

In December 2019, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) and Abu Dhabi Police had announced that all new vehicles coming to the UAE would be equipped with in-vehicle system that have eCall functionality.

Man jailed for throwing fake euro currency notes

Video of him throwing cash went viral

DUBAI
BY ALI AL SHOUK
Senior Reporter

The Dubai Court of First Instance yesterday sentenced a Dubai-based businessman to two years in jail after a video went viral showing him throwing 50,000 fake euro notes at a group of workers while driving a luxury car.

The 32-year-old Ukrainian businessman claimed that he posted the video on his Instagram page to gain more followers. Dubai Police searched the businessman's house and found \$740,000 (Dh2.7 million) and €467,000 (Dh2 million) in fake banknotes. According to the Dubai Court of First Instance, the defendant ordered the fake dollars from a Chinese website. The fake euros were made for the defendant from a copy print shop in Dubai.

A 26-year-old Emirati policeman at Cyber Crime Department in Dubai Police said that the police spotted the video of the defendant throwing the fake banknotes from his moving car at Al Quoz. “He violated social distancing rules by creating a gathering of Asian workers who chased him to collect the money. He claimed later that the €50,000

were fake and he did it to have more followers on his Instagram account,” said the Emirati policeman in official records.

Dubai Police set up a trap to arrest the 36-year-old Indian salesman who works in a copy shop as he was delivering 1.5 million euros to the businessman.

Both defendants were sentenced for two years in jail to be followed by deportation and Dh200,000 fine. Judges ordered the confiscation of the fake banknotes.

