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Asteroid belt mission: Concept review of lander completed

EMA aims to explore seven asteroids, flying past six and landing on Justitia

ABU DHABI

Gulf News Report

The UAE yesterday announced a new milestone in the Emirates Mission to the Asteroid Belt (EMA) with the completion of the concept review of a lander designed to study asteroid Justitia.

The lander will be aboard the MBR Explorer spacecraft named after His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

It is scheduled to blast off to space in March 2028 for the "world's first multiple-asteroid tour and landing mission".

The review aimed to ensure the readiness of the design to move to more detailed stages in the development process, verify its technical feasibility and schedule, and identify potential risks that may affect the project in the upcoming stages.

The EMA aims to explore seven asteroids, flying past six and landing on Justitia, one of the most puzzling objects in the belt located between Mars and Jupiter.

Emirati space startups

The meeting was attended by the Standing Review Board, headed by Mark Lanton, senior Engineering Adviser. The Board includes experts from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, EMA's Science Team, and officials from the UAE Space Agency.

During the meeting, Emirati space start-ups presented an introduction to the mission, concept of the operation, science objectives, and team resources.

Mohsen Al Awadhi, Mission Director of EMA, said:

13-YEAR MISSION

The 13-year Emirates Mission to the Asteroid Belt includes six years for spacecraft development and a seven-year mission through the main asteroid belt beyond Mars.

The MBR Explorer will seek to probe the origin and evolution of water-rich asteroids. It will also estimate the potential of using these asteroids as resources for future space exploration missions, determine geologic history and volatile content of multiple main belt asteroids, and measure temperatures and thermophysical properties on multiple asteroids to assess their surface evolution and volatile histories.

"We are committed to providing a supportive environment to create qualitative economic opportunities for Emirati and international start-ups based in the UAE, in addition to accelerating the growth of innovation and advanced technology companies in the UAE's space sector."

Planet X Challenge

Al Awadhi said that designs presented during the lander mission concept review were those that reached the final stage of the Planet X Challenge, launched during the Dubai Airshow 2023.

As part of a series of local and international workshops, the UAE Space Agency recently hosted the 'Space Means Business' workshop.

Attracting more than 200 participants, the workshop shed light on EMA's business opportunities, as well as the support and expertise that the mission is offering participants in the rapidly growing global space market.



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