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UAE, global team find source of the biggest quake on Mars

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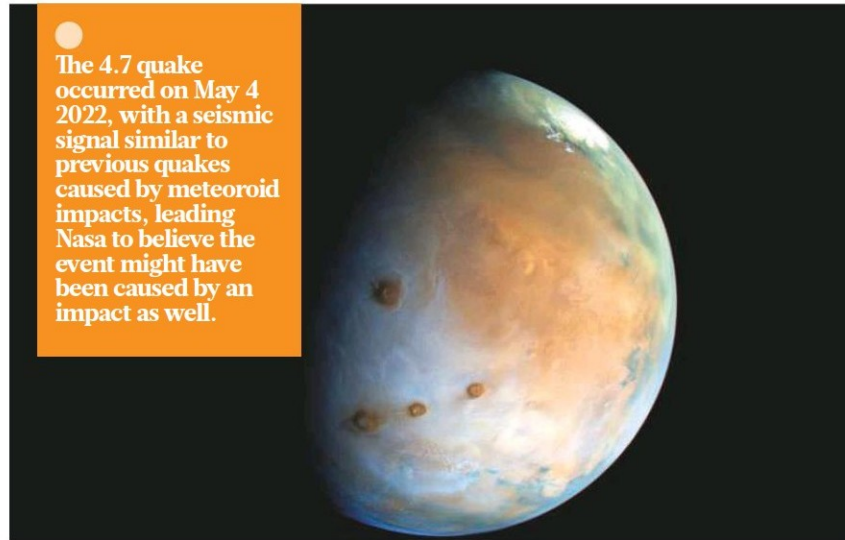
BY FAISAL MASUDI
Assistant Editor

A global team of scientists from NYU Abu Dhabi and other organisations have announced the results of an unprecedented search for the source of the largest ever seismic event recorded on Mars, and conclude that it was the result of enormous tectonic forces within Mars being released.

The quake, which had a magnitude of 4.7 and occurred on May 4 2022, was recorded by Nasa's InSight lander. As its seismic signal was similar to previous quakes caused by meteoroid impacts, the team believed that this event (dubbed 'S1222a') might have been caused by an impact as well, and launched an international search for a fresh crater.

Huge international effort

Due to the huge amount of ground to be covered, the team sought contributions from the European Space Agency, the Chinese National Space Agency, NYU Abu Dhabi, the Indian Space Research Organisation, and the United Arab Emirates Space Agency. A collaboration of this size is believed to be a first in Mars research. Each group examined data from their satellites orbiting Mars to look for a new crater, or any other telltale signature of an impact (e.g. a dust cloud appearing in



The 4.7 quake occurred on May 4 2022, with a seismic signal similar to previous quakes caused by meteoroid impacts, leading Nasa to believe the event might have been caused by an impact as well.

■ A collaborative research revealed that the seismic event on Mars was not the result of a meteoroid impact, but rather the release of significant tectonic forces within Mars' interior.

the hours after the quake).

After several months of searching, the team announced today that no fresh crater was found. They conclude that the event was caused by the release of enormous tectonic forces within Mars' interior. Resultantly, they are now revising their estimates of how seismically active the planet is.

The study's lead author, Benjamin Fernando of the University of Oxford and Johns Hopkins University, said: "This project represents a huge inter-

national effort to help solve the mystery of S1222a. We believe this is the first time that all missions in orbit around Mars have collaborated on a single experiment, and I am incredibly grateful to them all. I hope this project serves as a template for productive international collaborations in deep space."

Group Leader for Mars at NYU Abu Dhabi Dimitra Atri, who is also a contributor of data from the UAE's Hope Spacecraft, said: "This has been a great opportunity for me to col-

laborate with the InSight team, as well as with individuals from other major missions dedicated to the study of Mars. This really is the golden age of Mars exploration!"

S1222a was one of the last events recorded by InSight before its end of mission was declared in December 2022. The team are now moving forward by applying knowledge from this study to future work, including upcoming missions to the Moon and Titan, Saturn's largest moon.