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Two astrophysicists debunk Musk's theory

Idea of a million people in Mars termed 'unrealistic', a 'dangerous delusion'

DUBAI
BY ANGEL TESORERO
Senior Reporter

Two renowned scientists have dismissed suggestions that humans could live on Mars over the long-term and even called tech-billionaire Elon Musk's prediction a 'dangerous delusion' that a million people will soon live on the Red Planet.

Speaking during the World Government Summit Dialogues in Dubai on Wednesday, Lord Martin Rees, astrophysicist, cosmologist and 60th president of The Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge, said: "The only reason for humans to go to space would be for adventure. To live on Mars is not going to be easy. Mars has a hostile environment. So, the idea of Elon Musk to have a million people settle on Mars is a dangerous delusion. Living on Mars is no better than living on the South Pole or the tip of Mount Everest."

Unrealistic plan

Another popular astrophysicist, Dr. Neil DeGrasse Tyson, added "Musk's plan is unrealistic." He explained: "To ship a billion people to another planet to help them survive a catastrophe on Earth seems unrealistic. If you want to call Mars home, you need to terraform Mars — turn it into Earth (to support life). It is, however, much easier to make Earth return to Earth again rather than terraforming Mars."

Dr. Tyson and Lord Rees, meanwhile, both remarked it's always a go for space exploration and collaboration.

TWO-FOLD PLAN TO BOOST SPACE INDUSTRY

After sending the first Arab spacecraft to Mars, the UAE will engage the private sector to further boost the country's space industry and diversify the economy, Sarah Al Amiri, Minister of State for Advanced Technology and Chairperson of the UAE Space Agency, said on the final day of the World Government Summit Dialogues in Dubai on Wednesday.

Al Amiri noted that now that the Hope Probe is orbiting Mars and will soon transition to its Science phase, to begin its core mission of studying the atmosphere of the Red Planet, the next step is to transfer the knowledge and experiences gained by the Emirates Mars Mission (EMM) to the private sector.

She said there will be a two-fold approach — the UAE space industry will attract foreign investors and innovators to further enhance capacity-building and at the same time, it will build up the space sector by enabling the private sector.

—A.T.

Inter-planetary exploration is essential since the solar system is the "world's backyard".

Dr. Tyson said: "Space is for everyone and the solar system is like the world's backyard. So, it's great to see that collaborations are becoming important in space exploration and countries are coming together to share knowledge and resources."