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■ Dr Shareef Al Romaithi with fellow primary crew members Jason Lee, Stephanie Navarro, and Piyumi Wijesekara before entering the Hera habitat at Johnson Space Centre.

Al Romaithi begins 45-day mission in Nasa's Hera habitat

Facility designed to simulate long-duration space missions

DUBAI

Gulf News Report

The Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) yesterday began phase two of the second analogue study under the UAE Analog Programme.

Emirati crew member Dr Shareef Al Romaithi entered the Human Exploration Research Analog (Hera) habitat at Nasa's Johnson Space Centre in Houston, Texas, at 2am (UAE time) on Saturday.

Dr Al Romaithi was joined by his fellow primary crew members Jason Lee, Stephanie Navarro, and Piyumi Wijesekara, as they embarked on the 45-day mission in the Hera facility. The alternate crew members for the mission are Jose Baca and Brandon Kent.

Virtual reality 'walk'

The unique three-story habitat simulates space-like conditions on Earth, designed to study how crew members adapt to isolation, confinement, and remote conditions similar to those they would face on long-duration space missions.

Throughout their simulated journey in Hera, the team will



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Salem Humaid Al Marri | Director-general, MBRSC

WHY IT MATTERS

The second analogue study under the UAE Analog Programme is part of a comprehensive four-phase analogue study, consisting of 18 human health studies on Earth. These studies are aimed at understanding the physiological, behavioural, and psychological responses of crew members under conditions similar to those expected on future lunar and Martian exploration missions.

engage in scientific research and operational tasks. This mission on Earth includes a virtual reality "walk" on Mars' surface and managing increasing communication delays with Mission Control Centre as they simulate nearing Mars. The crew is sched-

uled to leave the facility on June 24.

Salem Humaid Al Marri, Director-general, MBRSC, said, "The UAE Analog Programme is a cornerstone of our vision to integrate advanced scientific research with our strategic objectives, positioning the UAE as a leader in space technology both regionally and internationally. Through these detailed Earth-based simulations in collaboration with our partners at Nasa, we are meticulously preparing our cadres for the vast challenges of deep space exploration..."

The UAE also plays a pivotal role in these research initiatives, with scientific experiments being provided by the United Arab Emirates University, Mohammad Bin Rashid University of Medicine and Health Sciences, and American University of Sharjah, across all four phases of the analogue study.