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TAKES A CHANCE ON FANS**

Analogue astronaut's isolation drill begins

DUBAI

BY ANJANA KUMAR
Senior Reporter

The UAE's first analogue astronaut Saleh Al Ameri yesterday entered an eight-month isolation period in Moscow as part of UAE's mission to train for long-term space travel.

UAE Analogue Mission No. 1 is part of the Scientific International Research in Unique Terrestrial Station (SIRIUS). After successful training and tests, Al Ameri took on the mission led by Dubai-based Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) to study the effects of isolation and confinement on human psychology, physiology and team dynamics to help prepare for long-duration space exploration.

At 3pm UAE time yesterday, Al Ameri entered the NEK ground-based analogue facility of the Russian Academy of Sciences' IBMP.

Stringiest tests

MBRSC had received 172 applications for the positions, and the applicants underwent various phases of rigorous evaluation in accordance with international standards, before two candidates were selected.

In an interview with *Gulf News*, Al Ameri said: "My goal is to represent my country to complete the mission successfully without having side effects of the isolation and the stress."