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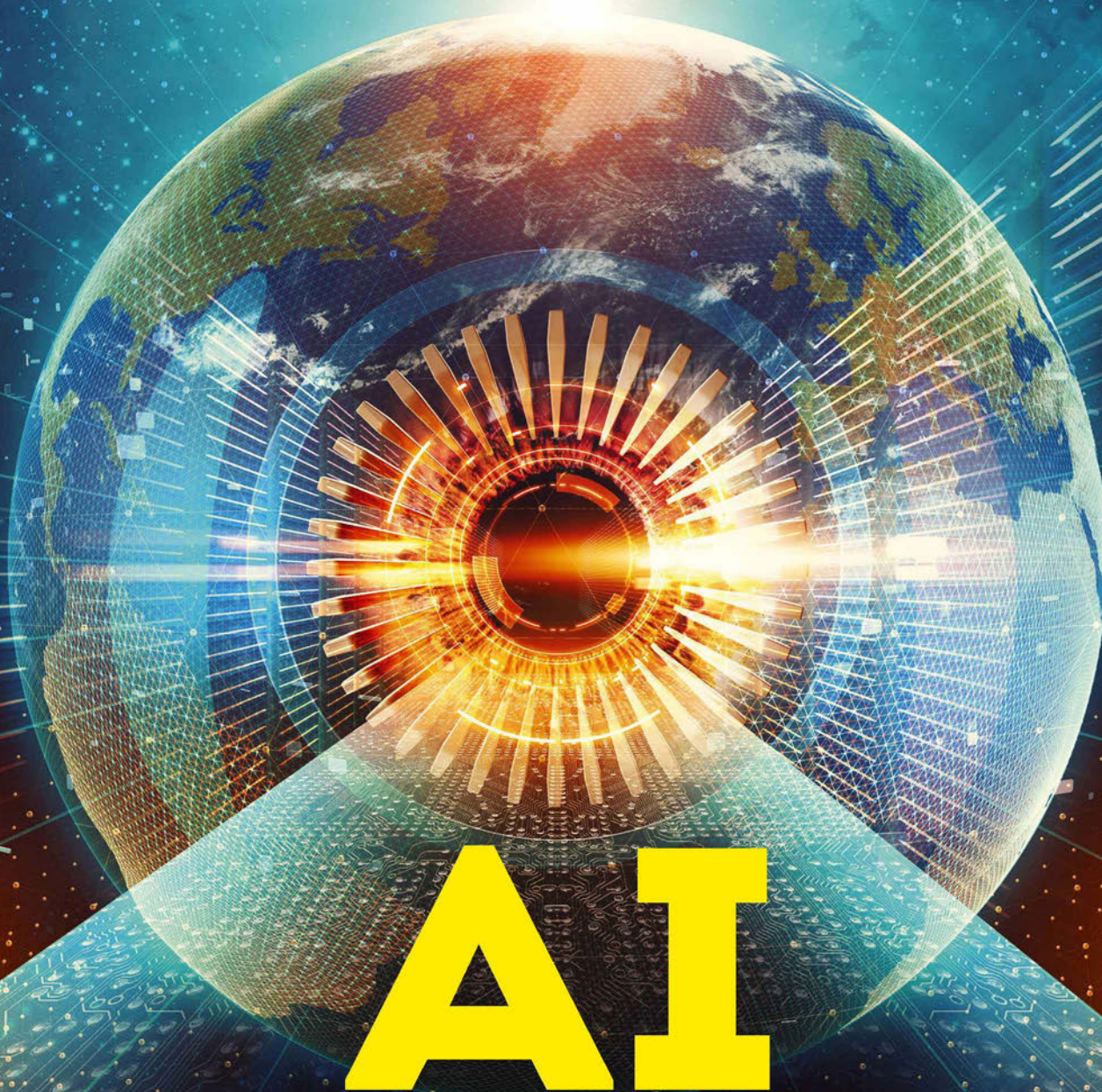
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EYE OPENER

Splashdown success

PANAMA CITY, FLORIDA, USA

In the early hours of 31 May, the crew of Axiom Space's Axiom Mission 2 (Ax-2) safely returned to Earth after a nine-day trip to the International Space Station.

Ax-2 saw SpaceX's Crew Dragon capsule Freedom launch on a Falcon 9 rocket for its second trip to the ISS. Mission commander Peggy Whitson and pilot John Shoffner were accompanied by the Saudi Space Commission's Ali AlQarni and Rayyanah Barnawi, who became the first two Saudi astronauts to visit the ISS and, in Barnawi's case, the first Saudi woman in space.

During their eight days aboard the ISS, the four crew members carried out experiments related to genome sequencing, cloud seeding and the effects of microgravity on stem cells. After a 12-hour return flight, they splashed down in the Gulf of Mexico, where SpaceX's recovery ship *Megan* was waiting to meet them.

While this was Freedom's second flight, it was the 10th crewed flight for SpaceX's Crew Dragon craft. Its next one will see the spacecraft Endurance embark on the Crew-7 mission in August.

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