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UAE's space
diplomacy and
ambitions



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Al Neyadi ready for mission to relocate Dragon today

Crew-6 members
all set to move
spacecraft's docking
port on the ISS

DUBAI

Gulf News Report

The Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) has announced that astronaut UAE astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi will join in a mission to relocate the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft's docking port today, to make way for the arrival of an upcoming cargo spacecraft on the International Space Station (ISS).

Al Neyadi – who created history as the first Arab space-walker during Expedition 69 recently, and who is on the longest Arab space mission for six months on ISS – will take part in the latest mission along with the Crew-6 members, NASA astronauts Stephen Bowen and Woody Hoburg, and Roscosmos cosmonaut Andrey Fedyayev.

Live coverage

The live coverage of the mission will start at 3pm UAE time and will be broadcast on the website of MBRSC. The Crew-6 crew members will undock from the space-facing port of the space station's Harmony module at 3:10pm UAE time. The spacecraft will dock again at the station's forward Harmony port at 3:53pm UAE time.

The relocation, supported by the Mission Control Center at Nasa's Johnson Space Center in Houston and SpaceX in Hawthorne, California, will free up Harmony's space-facing port for the docking of the



■ Sultan Al Neyadi with his fellow crew members on the ISS.

FIGHTING FIT

JIU-JITSU SESSION MARKS ANOTHER FIRST

Sultan Al Neyadi, on Thursday scripted yet another chapter in history by becoming the first person to practise jiu-jitsu in space.

Al Neyadi shared a six-minute video that showed how the martial art helped him thrive in the microgravity laboratory and perform his historic spacewalk. "Discipline, focus, & adaptability I gained from #JiuJitsu have been invaluable to me on the ISS," he said in the description for the video.

"Even in microgravity, the moves & postures I learned on Earth serve me well up here," he said. "I've been doing jiu-jitsu for so many years. And I think jiu-jitsu helped me a lot during my preparation with this mission and getting adapted to the environment here on the International Space Station."

—Sajila Saseendran, Senior Reporter

next Dragon cargo spacecraft set to launch in June.

The zenith port on Harmony will allow the Canadarm2 robotic arm easier access to the ISS Roll-Out Solar Arrays, or IROSAs, that will arrive on SpaceX's 28th commercial resupply mission for Nasa for installation through a series of spacewalks. This will be the third port relocation of a Dragon crew spacecraft, following



Watch a video of
Sultan Al Neyadi
practising jiu-jitsu
on the ISS

previous relocations during the Crew-1 and Crew-2 missions.

Al Neyadi along with his Crew-6 team had launched from Cape Canaveral in Florida on March 2.

UAE'S SPACE DIPLOMACY AND AMBITIONS

Al Neyadi's mission to the International Space Station boosts UAE ambitions to become a global leader in space exploration

BY KRISTIAN ALEXANDER AND GINA BOU SERHAL | *Special to Gulf News*

Space exploration is of great significance to the UAE and the country has taken another major leap with UAE astronaut Dr Sultan Al Neyadi arriving at the International Space Station (ISS) as part of Nasa's SpaceX Crew-6 Mission, marking the Arab world's first long-duration space mission and the UAE's second mission to the ISS.

There are, however, broader objectives that the UAE is seeking to accomplish.

By investing in space-related activities the UAE intends to diversify its economy and reduce its dependence on oil. The UAE has set a goal of developing a knowledge-based economy, and space exploration is seen as a key area of growth and development for the country.

Space exploration is also a way to inspire and engage the country's youth in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education. The UAE has placed a strong emphasis on education and workforce development in recent years, and investing in space exploration is seen as a way to encourage more students to pursue STEM careers.

In addition, the UAE sees space exploration as a way to enhance its international reputation and promote the country as a global leader in science and technology. By investing in space-related activities, the UAE aims to position itself as a hub for space research and innovation in the Middle East and beyond.

One of the most notable examples of the UAE's space diplomacy is the Emirates Mars Mission, which sent the country's first spacecraft, the Hope Probe, to Mars in 2021. The mission involved collaboration with scientists and engineers from several countries, including the United States, Japan, and the United Kingdom. The UAE's participation in the mission demonstrated the country's commitment to international cooperation in space exploration and research. The UAE made history by becoming the first Arab country and the fifth in the world to reach Mars with the successful insertion of the Hope spacecraft into Mars' orbit.

Another example of the UAE's space diplomacy is its participation in the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). The UAE has been an active member of the committee and has contributed to its work on promoting peaceful uses of outer space and developing international space law.

Open to partnerships

The UAE Space Agency has established partnerships with several nations and international organisations and signed collaboration agreements with Nasa, Japan, and China, the European Space Agency and memoranda of understanding with the US Strategic Command



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(USSTRATCOM), UK, China, and the National Space Science and Technology Center. The UAE has also doubled the size of its astronaut corps, including the selection of the first Arab female astronaut. In 2022, the UAE launched a \$820 million fund to boost space initiatives, with the first investment going towards the establishment of a remote sensing satellite constellation.

One of the UAE's space programmes main objectives is to ensure the security and sustainability of its space assets. The UAE operates several satellites for various purposes, including remote sensing, Earth observation, and communication. These satellites are critical for the UAE's economic, social, and strategic development.

Sustainable approach

In terms of space security, the UAE has taken several steps to mitigate the risks to its space assets. For example, the UAE Space Agency has established a Space Debris Mitigation Guideline to minimise the risks of collision with space debris. The UAE has also invested in space situational awareness (SSA) technologies to enhance its ability to detect and track potential threats to its space assets.

Regarding space sustainability, the UAE has adopted a sustainable approach to space activities. The UAE Space Agency has developed a Space Sustainability Rating system to evaluate and promote sustainable space practices.

The Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) is a key player in the UAE's space industry. It is responsible for developing and implementing the country's space strategy and advancing its space capabilities.

In 2020, Dubai launched its Space Science Strategy, which aims to enhance the emirate's space science capabilities and contribute to the global space sector. In 2017, the UAE announced the construction of the Mars Scientific City, a simulation of a human settlement on Mars.

The UAE astronaut's presence on the ISS provides further opportunities for scientific research collaborations with other astronauts on board. The research conducted on the ISS will significantly contribute to the understanding of various scientific fields, and the UAE will benefit greatly from being part of this important scientific endeavour.

Sending a UAE astronaut to space to be part of the ISS is another significant achievement for the UAE's space programme and its ambitions to become a global leader in space exploration and innovation.

■ *Dr. Kristian Alexander is a Senior Fellow and Director of the International Security & Terrorism Program at Trends Research & Advisory, Dubai. Gina Bou Serhal is a Researcher at the Strategic Studies Department at Trends Research & Advisory, Dubai.*