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EMIRATES LITFEST TO EXTEND ORBIT FAR AND WIDE

Al Neyadi to launch segment from ISS; Expo City tie-up to promote COP28 via book clubs, talks

DUBAI
BY SAJILA SASENDRAN
Senior Reporter

UAE astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi will tell stories from space to school students on a weekly basis during his six-month mission on the International Space Station (ISS), it was revealed yesterday.

Al Neyadi's videos will be beamed to schools every Thursday via a new website, top officials of Emirates Literature Foundation (ELF) and Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) said at a press conference to announce highlights of the 15th edition of Emirates Airline Festival of Literature (Emirates LitFest) that kicked off this morning.

His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, praised the role played by the LitFest in nurturing culture and creativity. "Today, the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature completes 15 years of celebrating creativity, culture and book industry," Shaikh Mohammad said in a tweet.

"We celebrate cultural events in Dubai in particular, because culture reflects the essence of man in our society. Culture is evidence of civilisation. And our life is not complete without economic sufficiency, cultural depth and social cohesion," Shaikh Mohammad added.

"ELF in Space" has come about with ELF partnering with MBRSC to launch the family education programme, announced Isabel



■ Nadla Verjee of Expo City Dubai, Boutros Boutros of Emirates Group, Mohammad Ahmad Al Murr of the Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Library Foundation, Isabel Abulhoul, Dr Saeed Mubarak Bin Kharbush of Dubai Culture, and Salem Humaid Al Marri of MBRSC at a press conference to announce the opening of the Emirates Literature Festival 2023 yesterday.

Abulhoul, CEO and trustee, Emirates Literature Foundation.

The programme will see children engage with astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi through his six-month stint at ISS. "The dynamic interactions with Sultan and other astronauts involved in the programme will serve us to stimulate, engage, excite and educate students across the UAE and region," said Abulhoul.

Educational content from space will be aired to schools on

a weekly basis under the ELF in Space initiative, said Salem Humaid Al Marri, director general of MBRSC. "Videos that will be taken from space and then be broadcast, either live or pre-recorded and put on a weekly basis on a website. And that will then go to all schools," he told *Gulf News*.

He said Al Neyadi will be talking about his life in space, his routine, the importance of reading and science etc.

Al Neyadi is scheduled to

head to ISS for a six-month mission on February 26.

Abulhoul said there will be a dedicated open space website that will be launched to stream the space sessions.

She also announced another partnership with Expo City Dubai that will organise a series of book clubs and student talks in the lead up to COP28 and beyond. "We both believe in connecting minds and empowering the future and all of the things

AWE-INSPIRING ACCOUNT

Major General Mohammad Ahmad Al Marri, Director General of General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs (GDRFA) was among the speakers who enthralled the audience on the inaugural day of the LitFest.

Speaking on 'Dubai, A Friend — Past, Present and Future,' Major General Al Marri took the audience back to the pre-union days of the UAE and Dubai and traced the tremendous growth of the Emirate and the country. He recounted life in the desert back in the time. "It was burning hot and scorching sand. We hardly had plants and flowers. Very rarely we used to see cars," he said.

Lauding the visionary leadership of the UAE, particularly that of His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, for the astronomical growth of Dubai, he said: "We need to respect and appreciate it to give back all that Dubai has given us," he added, pointing out that there was no room for bad behaviour in Dubai, which has opened its arms to welcome people of more than 200 nationalities.

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15 years
of the Emirates
Literature Festival
In Dubai

that Expo has done so well. We want to continue that with relevant books for the book club, and to encourage people to come in the evenings to join in to have the conversations. I'm sure there'll be authors flying in," she said.

The Foundation will collaborate with Expo City Dubai on a nine-month long programme that is centred on environment, sustainability, reducing gender inequalities and other themes derived from the UN sustainable



Read the detailed story online