



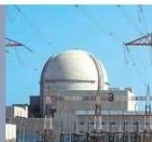
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# How the Astronaut Programme has made UAE a space pioneer

Al Neyadi will become second Emirati to travel to International Space Station

**DUBAI**  
BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN  
Senior Reporter

The UAE's Astronaut Programme has transformed the desert nation to a space pioneer in the region and demonstrates the country's boundless ambitions.

The nation is now preparing to send its second Emirati astronaut, Sultan Al Neyadi who is just days away from lift-off to the International Space Station.

The UAE Astronaut Programme prepares Emirati astronauts for manned missions to

## TEST COMPLETED

It looks all-clear for the UAE astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi's scheduled lift-off to space on Monday with the launch rehearsal and rocket test completion yesterday.

The static fire test of Falcon 9 rocket and dry rehearsal of Crew-6 members are complete, announced SpaceX.

the ISS and other destinations in space, according to the Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre that was founded in 2006.

The first of its kind in the Arab world, the programme provides necessary training, expertise, and qualification for

Emirati cadres to represent the UAE, and the Arab world, in future space missions and to conduct scientific experiments.

The UAE Astronaut Programme was initiated in April 2017 by President His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, to prepare an Emirati astronaut corps for scientific space exploration missions, creating a culture of scientific endeavour and motivating the youth to pursue space science and technology.

The UAE Astronaut Programme is funded by the ICT Fund of the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA).

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# UAE ASTRONAUT PROGRAMME DREAMS BIG

Second ISS mission involving an Emirati shows tireless spirit behind nation's space aspirations

## DUBAI

BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN  
Senior Reporter

**T**he UAE's Astronaut Programme has transformed the desert nation into a space pioneer in the region and demonstrates the country's boundless ambitions.

As the second Emirati astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi is just days away from lift-off to the International Space Station (ISS), here is a look at how the country's ambitious Astronaut Programme began and how it is going.

The UAE Astronaut Programme prepares Emirati astronauts for manned missions to the ISS and other destinations in space, according to the Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) that was founded in 2006.

The first of its kind in the Arab world, the programme provides the necessary training, expertise, and qualification for Emirati cadres to represent the UAE, and the Arab world, in future space missions and to conduct scientific experiments that support the global space exploration process.

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### First batch and first mission

In 2018, astronauts Hazza Al Mansoori and Sultan Al Neyadi were selected, from a pool of more than 4,000 applicants who applied to the UAE Astronaut Programme, to form the first batch of the programme. On September 25, 2019, Al Mansoori, the first Emirati astronaut, carried out the first manned scientific mission into space for the UAE on board the International Space Station, under the slogan 'Zayed's Ambition.' Al Neyadi also underwent the same



## MAKING HISTORY

Last April, the UAE announced the first long-duration Arab astronaut mission making the country the 11th only to send astronauts on long-duration space missions to the ISS.

In July 2022, Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed and Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid announced the selection of astronaut Al Neyadi to participate in the first long-duration Arab astronaut mission.

training programmes as a reserve astronaut.

In 2021, the second batch of the UAE Astronaut Programme saw the first female Arab astronaut, Nora Al Matrooshi, and Mohammad Al Mulla selected from among 4,305 applicants.

The two astronauts from the second batch of the UAE Astronaut Programme joined the '2021 Nasa Astronaut Candidate Class,' as part of a joint strategic agreement between the UAE and the US, to train them at Nasa's Johnson Space Centre.

In April 2022, the UAE announced the first long-duration Arab astronaut mission, making the country the 11th only to send astronauts on long-duration space missions to the ISS.

In July 2022, Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed and Shaikh Mohammad Bin Rashid announced the selection of astronaut Al Neyadi to participate in the first long-duration Arab astronaut mission. He will be part of Nasa's SpaceX Crew-6 mission with the crew members tasked with conducting large-scale scientific experiments.

During the mission, Al Neyadi will conduct a series of advanced experiments to arrive at important scientific results about outer space and participate in an awareness and educational programme involving



Emirati astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi (far right) is a picture of confidence during the static fire test of the Falcon 9 rocket and dry rehearsal for Crew-6 members headed to the International Space Station yesterday.



Virendra Saklani/Gulf News

■ Sultan Al Neyadi

researchers and students. The Crew-6 mission, which includes two US astronauts and a Russian cosmonaut along with Al Neyadi, is targeting lift-off at 10:45am on Monday, February 28.

The logo of the 'UAE Mission 2' depicts an astronaut wearing the spacesuit and looking at a portrait of Shaikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the UAE's founding father, who had a vision and dream to see his country exploring space. To develop a sustainable astronaut programme, the UAE intends to chart several space flights in the future. Also, the country is in discussions with Nasa about taking part in the Artemis programme, which aims to establish

## FULL REHEARSAL

# SpaceX completes tests to ensure stage is set for flawless launch

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SpaceX, Elon Musk's spacecraft manufacturer Space Exploration Technologies Corp, which has collaborated with Nasa for the Crew-6 mission, announced in a tweet that Crew-6, SpaceX and Nasa completed a full rehearsal of launch day activities.

Static fire test of Falcon 9 also completed ahead of the Crew-6 mission to the International Space Station (ISS), it added in another tweet.

The Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) also tweeted these important updates

that have taken the UAE one step closer to its second astronaut mission, which will see the first Arab astronaut participating in a long-haul space expedition on board the ISS.

The static fire test is a vehicle ground test to check the whole pre-flight process and detect any potential issues. Having finished the dry dress rehearsal in their space suits in the spacecraft now docked vertically atop the rocket, the four-member crew including Al Neyadi looked happy and all set for the lift-off.

As per the new target, the lift-off of SpaceX Falcon 9 with Crew-6 will take place at the Launch Complex 39A (LC-39A) at Nasa's Kennedy Space Centre in Merritt Island, Florida. LC-39 A is the first of Launch Complex 39's three launch pads.

Weather officials have predicted a 95 per cent chance of favourable weather conditions for the launch on Monday, with the cumulus cloud rule serving as the primary weather concern. If there is any further delay, the back-up launch dates as of now are February 28, March 2,3 and 4.

a human presence on the Moon.

With the ambitious space missions, it is likely that the country's future astronauts will be part of the upcoming missions to the Moon, Mars and other plan-

ets. The Emirates Mars Mission 'Hope Probe' and the Emirates Lunar Mission 'Rashid Rover,' are the other milestone achievements of the UAE in its ever-expanding space ambitions.



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