

TILDA SWINTON: MORE TO HER THAN MEETS THE EYE

Hollywood star's honest take on fashion, films and family



Scan for our social media

NATION | P3

Emirates' special flight to honour Al Neyadi



THE VIEWS | P8

As Palestinians, we grieved this Thanksgiving



BUSINESS | P5

Abu Dhabi's Terminal A cuts check-in times

ABC VALUE OFFER

ABC CARGO & COURIER

800 916
www.abccargo.ae

UAE's space hero honoured with commemorative flight

HAZZAA AL MANSOORI, EXPEDITION 69 CREW JOIN AL NEYADI, MBRSC OFFICIALS

SALUTE IN THE SKY

DUBAI

BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN
Senior Reporter

Dubai's Emirates Airline yesterday flew a special flight across the UAE to celebrate the country's space achievements and honour its space hero, Dr Sultan Al Neyadi, following his return after the longest Arab space mission onboard the International Space Station (ISS).

Emirates chartered the one-off flight EK2641 in collaboration with the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC).

Joining Dr Al Neyadi onboard were the UAE's first astronaut Hazzaa Al Mansoori, who was also the first Arab Increment Lead for Expedition 69 as well as the Nasa astronauts and Russian Cosmonauts who were part of Expedition 69 aboard the ISS along with Dr Al Neyadi.

The crew included American astronauts Stephen Bowen, Warren Hoburg, and Francisco Rubio, as well as Russian cosmonauts Sergey Prokopenko, Dmitry Petelin, and Andrey Fedyayev. Emirates paid tributes to the space heroes through special announcements on the Public Announcement system.

Gulf News was among the select media on the flight which carried Salem Humaid Al Marri, Director General of MBRSC, and Emirates' Chief Operating Officer, Adel Al Redha along with close to 200 employees from MBRSC for the celebration.

Special decal, desserts

The Emirates A380 was emblazoned with a specially designed astronaut decal, celebrating the UAE's vision to build its capabilities in space exploration and aerospace innovation on the global stage. The space-themed livery carried the name of MBRSC along with an image of an astronaut. The flight also had a space-themed menu featuring desserts and condiments shaped like planets.

Commanded by Captain Abdalla Abdelrahman Al Hammadi and First Officer Alex Van Der Veer, EK2641



Emirati astronauts Dr Sultan Al Neyadi and Hazzaa Al Mansoori in front of Emirates' special flight that flew across the UAE yesterday to celebrate the country's space achievements.

I think going to space gives us a vantage point, a different overview about why we need to protect the planet as a whole, as nations that take care of the next generations."

Dr Sultan Al Neyadi | Emirati astronaut

Our space programme is sustainable. Our leadership is supporting our programme. Our plan is to launch [space missions] every four to five years."

Hazzaa Al Mansoori | Emirati astronaut

took off from Dubai International Airport at noon. The two-hour flight flew over all the emirates and made a special fly-past over Al Ain, the hometown of Dr Al Neyadi.

Space flights to be regular

Dr Al Neyadi said he was excited to be on the plane with his bigger family of the MBRSC team and Expedition crew members as well as the media persons who covered his historic mission.

"We will continue training and continue pushing our limits in space exploration," he said about his future plan.

Dr Al Neyadi hoped that space flights would become more regular and like flying on normal aircraft in the near

future and there would be more youngsters joining the space sector.

Space and climate change

He also shared his happiness about the special flight happening just ahead of the country's 52nd Union Day and the UN Climate Action Conference COP28 in Dubai.

"It is a great opportunity for everybody to be in the UAE and speak about ways to protect our planet... I think going to space gives us a vantage point, a different overview about why we need to protect the planet as a whole, as nations that take care of the next generations," he said about COP28.

Al Mansoori said he was

more than happy to be on the special flight with Al Neyadi and his Expedition 69 friends.

"Our space programme is sustainable. Our leadership is supporting our programme. Our plan is to launch [space missions] every four to five years," he pointed out.

He said his most cherishing memories from the ISS were looking down and seeing Earth.

Lifetime opportunity

Before take-off, Dr Al Neyadi and Al Mansoori visited Emirates Headquarters. Emirates employees had an opportunity to join a Q&A followed by a meet and greet with the two astronauts.

Salem Humaid Al Marri, Director General of MBRSC said, "We are grateful to Emirates for this exceptional gesture, honouring the astronauts and the team at MBRSC. Today's event symbolised our shared vision and commitment to pioneering and recognizing the contributions of the aerospace sector. As we look to the future, MBRSC remains dedicated to driving the UAE and the region towards new frontiers in space exploration and innovation."



WATCH: What and who are on-board the special flight to honour Al Neyadi