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## Al Neyadi all set to return home today

A GRAND RECEPTION TO CELEBRATE  
HOMECOMING OF SULTAN OF SPACE

**DUBAI**

**BY SA JILA SASEENDRAN**  
Senior Reporter

**T**he UAE is all set to welcome home the 'Sultan of Space,' the astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi, who is returning to the country today after having completed the longest Arab space mission and the first-ever spacewalk by an Arab.

A grand reception has been arranged to celebrate the homecoming of the 42-year-old Emirati astronaut which marks a historic moment in the nation's space exploration journey.

### Hero's welcome

Al Neyadi will receive a hero's welcome in Abu Dhabi, where he is expected to be greeted by leaders, top officials of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC), family members, and others. He will also meet his children, including one born during his mission.

Before returning home, Al Neyadi expressed gratitude to the UAE's leadership, family, friends, and the entire team that contributed to the success



**Al Neyadi will also meet his children, including one born during his mission.**

of his mission. He also thanked Nasa and other international partners. "Our mission has been accomplished, yet this marks the beginning of a series of contributions we aspire to make in this field," he said in a video shared by MBRSC.

After a two-week rehabilitation programme in Houston to readjust to Earth's gravity, his health is reported to be improving "by the hour" and he is "fully prepared to return home," officials of the MBRSC said over the weekend.

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# AL NEYADI IS COMING HOME,

# TO A HERO'S WELCOME

THE 'SULTAN OF SPACE' WHO CAME BACK TO EARTH A FORTNIGHT AGO AFTER A SIX-MONTH MISSION, IS SET TO ARRIVE IN THE UAE TODAY

## STELLAR RETURN

**DUBAI**  
BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN  
Senior Reporter

**A**n out-of-this-world welcome awaits UAE astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi in his homeland as he lands in Abu Dhabi today after his triumphant journey from space to Earth. The nation is set to honour the 'Sultan of Space' after he completed the longest Arab space mission on-board the International Space Station (ISS) – lasting six months – and the first spacewalk by an Arab.

Al Neyadi, along with three other Nasa SpaceX Crew-6 crewmates, splashed down from the ISS in the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft Endeavour off the coast of Jacksonville, Florida in the US at 8.17am UAE time on September 4.

They then flew to Nasa's Johnson Space Centre in Houston, US, for a two-week rehabilitation programme to readjust to gravity and life on Earth. The 42-year-old Emirati astronaut from Al Ain is returning home after more than a year, including the six months he spent aboard the ISS and the training away from the UAE.

### 'Time to come home'

"It's time to come home," Al Neyadi said on the eve of his historic homecoming. Taking to microblogging platform X, formerly Twitter, Al Neyadi shared a video recalling "the experience of a lifetime" during his mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS), and re-entry to Earth. He also took the opportunity to thank the UAE's

leaders and reaffirmed their vision for greater goals in space.

"From the start of the 5-year preparations for the mission to spending over 180 days in space, this has been the experience of a lifetime. After returning to Earth, it's time to come home. I look forward to seeing you all [today] in our beloved UAE," he said in the post.

### Fully prepared to fly home

Salem Humaid Al Marri, director-general of Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC), stated on X that Al Neyadi is "fully prepared to return home". Al Marri shared a photo of him with MBRSC team members who are stationed in Houston. "We are present with the administrative, medical and technical teams in Houston with Sultan and he is fully prepared to return home, God willing, [today]," he stated.

Al Marri said the scientific programme and the work schedule that Al Neyadi had started after returning from the ISS had been continuing and things were "fine". "Every time we talk, he tells us about his enthusiasm and longing for his homeland after an absence of more than a year spent between training and the mission in space," Al Marri added.

The father-of-six was received by his family members including his father, wife and brother at Houston after his historic return to Earth. However, Al Neyadi is yet to meet his children, including one born during his space mission, and other family members.

### Good news about health

Earlier on Saturday, Dr Hanan Al Suwaidi, Flight Surgeon, MBRSC, presented an up-



## MISSION HIGHLIGHTS IN NUMBERS



date on the rehabilitation phase that Neyadi is undergoing. In a video message on MBRSC's account on X, Dr Hanan said: "... A few days have passed since Sultan and his cremates returned to Earth. Today, they are undergoing a rehabilitation programme, and medical tests and continuing the research assigned to them. Sultan's health is improving not only daily, but also hour by hour."

### 'Everything felt heavy'

Speaking about his mission for the first time following their return to Earth, Al Neyadi on September 12 had revealed the challenges he faced following his re-entry into our planet's atmosphere. "Well, it felt really, really heavy," he said.

Having spent 186 days in microgravity, Al Neyadi admitted that the weighty sensation even prompted him to forego drink-

UAE, and sharing this unique experience with different entities such as schools, universities, and the people by my colleague Sultan Al Neyadi," Al Mansoori said.

Al Mansoori, who now holds the profile of Astronauts Office Manager at MBRSC as per his title seen in the video, said one of the objectives of the UAE Astronaut Programme is to promote science, share knowledge, and inspire future generations.

### Future missions

"In addition, my colleagues Nora Al Matrooshi and Mohammad Al Mulla are currently in Houston as part of Nasa's Astronaut Candidate Class," he said, referring to the second batch of Emirati astronauts.

"They are training on the different modules and systems of the ISS, preparing for spacewalks and learning to operate robotic arms. The main goal of this is to prepare Emirati astronauts for future missions," added Al Mansoori, who was also the first Arab Incentive for the Expedition 69 involving Crew-6 on-board the ISS.

### Benefits for humankind

Al Neyadi's mission included over 200 scientific experiments and technology demonstrations, the results of which are expected to benefit humankind back on Earth and future human space flight missions.

After spending a week or so in the UAE, he is expected to fly back to Houston to complete the research work.

## MISSION MILESTONES

- **March 2:** NASA SpaceX Crew-6 including Sultan Al Neyadi blast off to space from NASA's Kennedy Space Centre in Florida, US
- **March 3:** Al Neyadi and Crew-6 colleagues float into the International Space Station
- **April 28:** Al Neyadi performs the first-ever spacewalk by an Arab
- **September 3:** SpaceX Dragon Endeavour undocks from the ISS with Crew-6
- **September 4:** Endeavour splashes down off the coast of Jacksonville, Florida, US
- **September 12:** Al Neyadi and 2 crewmates make their first public appearance after return to Earth on NASA TV
- **September 18:** Scheduled arrival of the Sultan of Space in the UAE

## AL NEYADI FETED BY UNIVERSITY WHERE HE DID PHD

UAE astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi has been named as the 'Overall Outstanding International Alumni' at the Outstanding Alumni Awards 2023 at Griffith University, Australia, where he obtained a Master's degree in Information and Network Security and completed his PhD in data leakage prevention technology.

On September 4, Al Neyadi returned to Earth after completing the longest Arab space mission on-board the International Space Station, spanning six months. The 'Sultan of Space' is scheduled to arrive in the UAE on Monday.

Al Neyadi had gone to Australia to pursue a master's degree from Griffith University in 2008. He returned home to work as a Network Security Engineer for the UAE Armed Forces.

Later, in 2012, he returned to Australia, where he was based for five years, and went on to obtain a PhD.

— Faisal Masudi,  
Assistant Editor



**READ:** GulfNews' live coverage of Al Neyadi's homecoming starts at 5:20pm