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# RASHID ROVER TO LAND ON MOON ON APRIL 25

'UAE really looking at the moon' in the next decade, MBRSC director-general says at SpaceOps

**DUBAI**  
BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN  
Senior Reporter

**T**he UAE's Rashid Rover is scheduled to land on the Moon's surface towards the end of April, a top official revealed yesterday.

Salem Al Marri, director-general of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) was addressing a plenary session on the opening day of the 17th International Conference on Space Operations (SpaceOps 2023) in Dubai. The event runs until March 10. SpaceOps is hosted by MBRSC for the first time in the Arab world, under the theme 'Invest in Space to Serve Earth and Beyond'.

The Japanese lander carrying Rashid Rover has travelled 1.6 million km and is expected to make a shallow landing on April 25, Al Marri said.

The lander is expected to attempt a lunar orbit insertion in late March. Weighing just 10kg, the exploration rover aims to study the geography of the lunar surface as well as lunar soil.

## Moon-bound missions

Al Marri said the UAE would be "really looking at the moon" in the next decade. "The moon is a big destination for us whether it is robotic or anything related to what's happening with Artemis, and that's all about international integration," he explained.

The Artemis programme is a robotic and human Moon exploration programme led by NASA. The UAE acceding to the



Virendra Saklani/Gulf News

■ A model of Rashid Rover on display at the MBRSC pavilion at the 17th edition of SpaceOps 2023 in Dubai yesterday. The event running until March 10 features top space experts.

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**Salem Al Marri**  
| Director-general of MBRSC

Artemis Accords is expected to pave the way for sending the first Emirati astronaut to the Moon. "We can't only look out to the Moon, we're also looking at Earth. So, we're planning a



All you need to know about the UAE's lunar mission and other space projects

series of satellites, the first being the MBZ-Sat," Al Marri said.

Dubbed the region's most advanced imaging satellite, the MBZ-Sat is named after the UAE President His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan. It is expected to be carried into orbit this year on a SpaceX ride-share mission on board a Falcon 9 rocket.

Badri Younes, NASA's deputy associate administrator for space communications and navigation (SCaN), said the global space

economy stood at \$469 billion in 2021. The projected global space activity by 2026 is expected to hit \$634 billion, he said.

## Special session

Day 1 of SpaceOps 2023 included a special session on 'Life Science Mission Ops to Space'.

Over the coming days, the forum will feature plenary sessions on various other topics, including Space Traffic Management - Needs and Solutions, Lunar Communications and International Interoperability, and Planetary Defense, with speakers from global agencies such as NASA, ESA, SANSA, and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, as well as academic and research institutes.

## SIX-MONTH ISS MISSION

*Al Neyadi trained and ready for spacewalk, Hazzaa says*

**DUBAI**  
BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN  
Senior Reporter

**H**ow is the 'Sultan of Space' doing in his new home in the International Space Station (ISS) and will he do a spacewalk? These are questions in the minds of everyone who has been closely following the longest space mission by an Arab country launched on March 2.

Yesterday, Sultan Al Neyadi's back-up in NASA's SpaceX Crew-6 mission and the UAE's first astronaut to visit the ISS in 2019, Hazzaa Al Mansoori, responded to these questions from the media on the sidelines of the 17th International Conference on Space Operations (SpaceOps 2023) in Dubai.

When *Gulf News* asked if he has spoken to Al Neyadi since he floated into the ISS on March 3, Al Mansoori said: "He called me two days ago. He was excited. He is really happy just to feel the weightlessness and he just wants to start work."

Asked if Al Neyadi would do a spacewalk, Al Mansoori, who refers to Al Neyadi as his "brother", said: "He was trained and he is ready to do it and everyone is definitely looking forward to it." However, he explained that a decision has not been taken yet. "It is a decision to be taken by NASA in consultation with MBRSC and others. It's going to be reviewed in future," he said.

## 259 spacewalks on ISS since December 1998

So far, only 259 spacewalks have been conducted on the ISS since December 1998, according to NASA. Of these, 194 were conducted in US spacesuits and 65 in Russian spacesuits. If Al Neyadi gets a chance to do it, he will be the first Arab astronaut (Najmonaut) to achieve the feat. "You have to be methodical, and you have to be more precise on the course and the movement as the environment of weightlessness is really very tricky. A very light movement can give you unpredicted movements, maybe like pushing you away from the station. That is why it is considered dangerous," Al Mansoori said.

