



FRIDAY

SEPTEMBER 19, 2025
RABI AL AWWAL 27, 1447

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Asteroid Mission right on track for 2028 launch

SPACECRAFT COMPLETES CRITICAL DESIGN REVIEW, NOW UNDER ASSEMBLY

DUBAI
BY AALIYA ALZAROONI
Reporter

The UAE Space Agency's Emirates Asteroid Mission is making steady progress while the Mohammad Bin Rashid Explorer spacecraft has completed its critical design review and is now under assembly.

This was revealed to *Gulf News* by Salem bin Butti Al Qubaisi as he launched the UAE Space Agency's 2025 Space Economy Survey.

The Emirates Asteroid Mission will unlock the secrets of ancient asteroids, examining their make-up, structure, and temperatures to reveal how they've evolved over billions of years.

'We are on track'

"Structural testing is currently underway. This development phase will continue over the next two years, followed by testing before the planned launch in 2028. Progress is steady, and we are on track," Al Qubaisi said.

The UAE's annual space sector survey, running since 2018, tracks the industry's role in the economy and guides future strategy. Results are published online, offering transparency

to the public. This year's edition deepened private sector input, supporting the UAE's 2031 goal of building a sustainable, globally competitive space economy.

Global trends

Reflecting global trends, Al Qubaisi highlights the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI). The agency has already begun integrating AI into research and operations.

"Earlier this year, we organised a hackathon where most of the projects used AI tools. We continue to encourage our partners, academia, and R&D institutions to leverage AI to make our work more efficient and impactful," Al Qubaisi said.

Engaging and inspiring the next generation of Emiratis is a central part of the UAE's space strategy. National programs, such as the astronaut program, have helped shape a strong culture of ambition and innovation among youth.

"This is not just about the UAE Space Agency, but a collective effort across the country," Al Qubaisi emphasised. "Our national programs and campaigns in academia have had a strong impact, and the visibility of the UAE's space ambitions continues to inspire the next generation."

Emirati to chair global satellite association

DUBAI
BY ALI AL HAMMADI
Reporter

Space42, the UAE-based AI-powered SpaceTech company, has announced that Ali Al Hashemi, CEO of its Space Services unit, has been elected chairman of the board of the Global Satellite Operators Association (GSOA). He is the first Emirati to hold the position.

Al Hashemi has more than two decades of experience in telecommunications, defence and aerospace. He has been vice-chair of GSOA since 2023 and has led several key projects at Space42, including the launch of the Thuraya-4 satellite earlier this year and the rollout of direct-to-device services in Africa.

He also chairs the Advanced Military Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul Centre (AMMROC) and sits on the boards of the UAE Space Agency (UAESA) and the National Space Science and Technology Centre.

Before Space42 was formed, he served as Group CEO of Yahsat, where he oversaw its listing on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange in 2021 – the second largest IPO in the exchange's history – and led the integration of Thuraya following its 2018 acquisition.

Al Hashemi was included in *Forbes Middle East's* Top 100 CEOs list in both 2023 and 2024.