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## Al Neyadi's hometown extends warm welcome to space hero

The reception in Umm Ghafa sees Nadba, Al Ayyala dances and a lot of handshakes

### DUBAI

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UAE astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi received a warm welcome in his hometown Umm Ghafa in Al Ain with an elaborate ceremony.

The heartwarming welcoming ceremony was held in the presence of top officials of the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC), the agency behind the UAE Astronaut Space Mission.

Yesterday, MBRSC tweeted pictures and videos of the ceremony which was attended by Hamad Obaid Al Mansoori, Chairman, Yousuf Hamad Al Shaibani, Vice-Chairman, and Salem Humaid Al Marri, Director General, MBRSC.

Well-wishers poured in to greet Al Neyadi in Umm Ghafa, a laid-back town, around 45 minutes' drive away from the city of Al Ain.

### An evening of celebration

Al Neyadi was accompanied by the UAE's pioneering astronaut and his reserve in the longest Arab space mission, Hazzaa Al Mansoori, in the evening of celebrations inside a sprawling villa where a stage was set for the two UAE astronauts. Hoardings with images of the first Arab spacewalker and messages welcoming him as well as the UAE flag in various sizes decorated the venue.



Ahmad Alotbi/Gulf News

■ Al Ain residents greet UAE astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi during a reception hosted in his honour in Umm Ghafa recently.



Ahmad Alotbi/Gulf News

■ Al Neyadi returned the wishes with a warm smile on his face.

Dignitaries and friends made their way to meet and greet the victorious astronaut who returned to Earth after staying 186 days in space, including 184 days on board the International Space Station (ISS).

In true Emirati spirit, the successful UAE astronauts were greeted by people. Men partici-

pating in the celebrations could be seen performing cultural dances, including Nadba and Al Ayyala, as they welcomed the space hero. Many seized the opportunity to do handshakes to Al Neyadi and take photos with him.

With a smile on his face, Al Neyadi greeted everyone. His sons also joined the celebrations with other Emirati children sporting kanduras that bore images of the astronaut and badges of his mission.

The UAE accorded a hero's welcome to Al Neyadi on his return to Abu Dhabi from the US on Monday with an out-of-this-world homecoming ceremony at the yet-to-be-inaugurated Abu Dhabi International Airport Terminal A.



**WATCH:** How the Al Ain town came together to celebrate their hero