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## An Emirati astronaut on Moon 'within a decade'

SPACE CENTRE CHIEF SAYS UAE'S ULTIMATE GOAL IS MARS



■ Salem Humaid Al Marri (right) and Salem Butti Al Qubaisi (centre) during a session moderated by Graham Brookie, Vice-President for Technology and Strategy, Atlantic Council.

**DUBAI**  
BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN  
Chief Reporter

**T**he UAE is accelerating its space ambitions, with plans to send its first astronaut to the Moon's surface within the next 10 years and a long-term vision for human exploration of Mars.

Salem Humaid Al Marri, Director-General of the Mohammad Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC), revealed the expected timeframe for the Moon landing mission during a World Governments Summit (WGS) session in Dubai yesterday.

"Honestly, what drives me – and I believe drives many at MBRSC – is the desire to see an Emirati on the surface of the Moon within the next 10 years," Al Marri said during the session.

### Global space initiatives

As part of its growing role in global space initiatives, the UAE is contributing an airlock system to Nasa's Lunar Gateway, the space station orbiting the Moon. In return, the UAE will secure future access for an

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**Salem Humaid Al Marri**  
| Director-General, MBRSC

Emirati astronaut to the orbital station and potential lunar surface missions.

As a signatory to the Artemis Accords, the UAE is actively contributing to international efforts in lunar exploration.

Speaking to *Gulf News*, Al Marri said Emirati astronauts are currently undergoing training on various elements of lunar exploration, including advanced spacesuit technologies and Gateway operations.

### From the Moon to Mars

But the Moon is just the beginning. Al Marri reaffirmed that the UAE's ultimate goal is Mars.

"Because we have that big vision, eventually we want to have rovers, power sources, humans, life support systems, space stations, whatever it may be, working and living on Mars," he said.

The UAE in 2017 had announced an ambitious goal of establishing a human settlement on Mars by 2117.

### The Hope Probe

The Emirates Mars Mission, which successfully sent the Hope Probe to orbit Mars, is a key step in building the knowledge and capabilities needed for future crewed missions.

Salem Butti Al Qubaisi, Director General of the UAE Space Agency, who joined Al Marri in discussing the country's commitment to deep space exploration, highlighted the nation's achievements, particularly the Emirates Mars Mission and the upcoming Emirates Mission to the Asteroid Belt.

Slated for launch in 2028, the mission spanning 13 years aims to explore seven asteroids between Mars and Jupiter by flying past six of them, culminating in a landing on Justitia.