

UAE 'Sultan of Space' grapples with Ramadan fast on ISS

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The UAE is a newcomer to the world of space exploration but quickly making its mark with lunar and interplanetary missions.

The second Emirati to journey into space, martial arts enthusiast Sultan AlNeyadi, weighed up Thursday performing Ramadan in orbit—and promised to pack his jiu-jitsu suit for the ride.

AlNeyadi, 41, dubbed the "Sultan of Space" by his alma mater, will blast off on February 26 for the International Space Station (ISS) aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

During his six months in orbit—a record time for any Arab astronaut—AlNeyadi said he would like to observe the holy month of Ramadan, when Muslims typically fast from dawn to sunset.

But space travel presents unique challenges.

"The ISS travels quickly... meaning it orbits around the Earth in 90 minutes," he told reporters in Dubai.

"On average, there are 16 sunrises and sunsets daily... When do you (start and) break your fast?"

AlNeyadi said he could fast according to GMT time, which is used on the ISS, if circumstances allow.

Fasting is not compulsory for certain groups of people, including those who are traveling or unwell.

"I will prepare for the month of Ramadan with the intention to fast," AlNeyadi said.

He will become the second man from the wealthy United Arab Emirates to go to space, after Hazzaa al-Mansoori's eight-day mission in 2019.



In space, Sultan AlNeyadi will study the impacts of microgravity on the human body in preparation for future missions.

During the voyage, AlNeyadi will study the impacts of microgravity on the [human body](#) in preparation for future missions to the Moon and Mars, he said.

Six months "may seem like a long time, but I don't mind because the schedule is packed".

It has already been a long journey for AlNeyadi, who served 20 years in the UAE military.

He also studied electronics and communications engineering in Britain,

and then completed a Ph.D. in data leakage prevention technology at Griffith University in Australia.

The UAE is a newcomer to the world of [space](#) exploration but quickly making its mark.

It sent an unmanned spacecraft to Mars in 2021, in the Arab world's first interplanetary mission, and last year a rover to the Moon.

AlNeyadi said he was "happy" to embark on the [mission](#) and would take along "pictures of my family, maybe some toys that belong to my children".

"I will also take my jiu-jitsu uniform because of my love for the sport," he added.

Asked whether he would do any low-gravity grappling while floating around the ISS, he laughed: "We'll see how it goes."

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