

TheNational

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from the editor
Mohammed Al Otaiba

Today, we look to the stars

Since time immemorial, mankind has sought to explore the world around us and understand our place in the cosmos. Although there are undoubtedly still undiscovered species of flora and fauna, and uncharted ocean floors – and we haven't yet completely understood how our bodies work – that hasn't stopped us from turning our eyes, and minds, to the heavens.

April 12 is the International day of Human Space Flight, a day to remember and celebrate the achievements of man on what is "the final frontier". Taking on the challenges of space exploration has meant furthering scientific research, developing new technologies – and, above all, stretching our imaginations.

But we need to remind ourselves that the exploration of space started on paper. It was only later, sometimes much later, that technology caught up with the human brain, the discoveries confirming so many of the theories. Yet that hasn't stopped us wanting to slip Earth's bonds, to experience the freedom of zero gravity, to walk on the Moon and maybe, one day, Mars.

Today, the UAE has embraced space. And so does *The National* in our special Weekend Space edition. Whether it's the filming of Star Wars in the vastness of the Empty Quarter or our planned 2021 Mars space mission, there's something extra-terrestrial for everybody here, even this weekend's Comic Con.

This journey began with a verse and the twinkle of a star. It continues with awe and wonderment. Space remains the ultimate challenge. And still we dream ... What if?

Beat that!



The three-day Urban Beats By The Beach got under way in Dubai yesterday and visitors were held enthralled by the UK's Dean Cueson, who displayed his biking skills. Pawan Singh / The National

Lift all the sanctions or no deal, says Iran

Signing of nuclear agreement takes a backward step as Khamenei and Rouhani make a fresh demand

TEHRAN // All sanctions against Iran must be lifted the day a nuclear deal is signed, its supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and president Hassan Rouhani insisted yesterday.

Their comments are likely to complicate efforts to reach a final agreement by the end of June, with the United States responding yesterday that sanctions would be lifted in stages.

"We will not sign any agreement, unless all economic sanctions are totally lifted on the first day of the implementation of the deal," said Mr Rouhani, speaking during a ceremony to mark Iran's nuclear technology day, which celebrates the country's achievements in the field.

Meanwhile, Mr Khamenei stopped short of giving his endorsement to the framework deal struck last week, saying he would wait until it was finalised.

In what appeared to be a bargaining tactic, the country's top leader said in remarks published yesterday on his official website that he "is neither for nor against" the deal, which is due to be finalised by June 30.

Mr Khamenei, who has the final say on all state matters, said there was "no binding" agreement yet.

He added in a televised speech that the details of the accord would be decisive, and that the publication of a US fact sheet showing terms that were at variance with the Iranian view of the agreement showed "devilish" American intentions.

"Everything is in the details; it may be that the deceptive other side wants to restrict us in the details," he said.

Mr Khamenei also demanded that all sanctions be lifted as soon as a final agreement was concluded.

Iran and the six world powers agreed last week on a framework deal meant to curb Iran's bomb capable technology while giving Tehran quick access to bank accounts, oil markets and financial assets blocked by sanctions.

But the deal did not include the immediate lifting of punitive sanctions. Instead, it said sanctions would be suspended once international monitors verified that Tehran was abiding by limitations spelt out in the agreement.

The deal also specified that if at any time Iran failed to fulfil its commitments, these sanctions would snap back into place.

"We're not going to respond to every public statement made by Iranian officials or negotiate in public," state department spokesman Jeff Rathke said yesterday.

"Sanctions will be suspended in a phased manner upon verification that Iran has met specific commitments under a finalised joint comprehensive plan of action."

The framework agreement received major endorsement by the Iranian establishment, though hardliners overwhelmingly opposed it and described the deal as a "defeat" for Iran.

★ Associated Press, Agence France-Presse and Reuters

more

Key actors Iran's proxy forces remain dominant and fighting for gains, **a7**

Editorial One should not mistake UAE assertiveness for aggression, **a10**

UAE plays a vital role for regional stability in Yemen

Country is 'a world leader in certain types of operations'

The National staff

ABU DHABI // While the UAE is prepared for a ground operation against rebels in Yemen if necessary, for Operation Decisive Storm, its role is also to provide regional stability and deliver humanitarian aid, say analysts.

"We are peace and security lovers, but the Houthi coup

on legitimacy and the Gulf initiative forced us to take action to defend the Yemeni legitimacy," Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed, the Foreign Minister, said on Wednesday.

Dr Theodore Karasik, a Dubai-based geopolitical analyst, said: "The outcome and implications for the UAE is to show that the Emirates plays a vital role in not only policing but also helping demilitarise factions and, especially, deliver humanitarian aid. The UAE is a regional and world leader in these significant capabilities."

"The UAE is unique in the types of military operations

that it has conducted historically," he said. "This includes mine clearing, humanitarian aid, air operations, and, of course, special operations over the past 25 years. It is an evolutionary path in military sciences in lessons learned involving organising, training and equipping."

In his remarks, Sheikh Abdullah said: "If we as Arabs like to say our origins are from Yemen, we must protect our origins."

Yemen, continued on 2 →

↳ Significant gain for Houthis, **a6**

Language issue as students call to be taught in Arabic

'Demand is not just for a few courses'

Melanie Swan

ABU DHABI // Demand from students for more university courses to be taught in their native Arabic has sparked debate among academics, with some believing English is better for the country's goal of becoming

a knowledge-based economy. Abu Dhabi University, the emirate's largest private university, had, until now, taught all of its courses in English in line with the Ministry of Higher Education's mandate.

However, it will offer subjects in Arabic for the first time in the coming academic year, including mass communications, which has only been running for two years.

Dr Nabil Ibrahim, ADU's chan-

cellor, said: "We started it in English two years ago and many of the students wanted to do it in Arabic, mainly because most newspapers here are in Arabic and most opportunities for employment consider a degree in Arabic of more value. This is certainly the case in Abu Dhabi, if not so much in Dubai."

Dr Ibrahim said there were calls for more Arabic-taught subjects, particularly in the remote areas of the country.

"I can see lately that there is a lot more demand for complete programmes in Arabic, not just a few of the courses," Dr Ibrahim said.

"This is certainly the case in areas like the Western Region where people go to Government schools and the dominant language is Arabic."

However, Soha Shami, research associate at Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research in Ras Al Khaimah, argued

against a switch to Arabic-only degrees.

Ms Shami said they would hinder the country's progress, particularly with the UAE's vision of becoming a knowledge economy and its Expo 2020 goals. "It's important to be able to communicate with people at a high level in both Arabic and English, especially in areas such as mass communications," she said.

Arabic, continued on 3 →

The National's Beach Picnic

Join us today from 2-5pm
East Plaza on the Corniche Beach, Abu Dhabi

- Meet the editors of The National
- Fun and games for the family
- #healthyliving discussion
- Hassan Alsheikh from Star FM

Special guest presentation by Ask Ali



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