

NATION



I'll make sure I share the experience not just with my kids but with the kids of the Arab region. Astronauts have a strong influence on the next generation."

Hazza Al Mansoori, Emirati astronaut

Quarantine must for astronauts

Sarwat Nasir
REPORTING FROM BAIKONUR

BAIKONUR — The last time the UAE's first astronaut will interact with his family before liftoff will be through a thick glass wall, about three hours prior to the launch to the International Space Station (ISS). Hazza Al Mansoori will be saying goodbye to his four children and wife from quite a distance.

The quarantine is one of many regulations that astronauts and cosmonauts have been following since the first man was launched into space in 1961.

In fact, they are kept away for several days ahead of the liftoff, including residing at the historic Cosmonaut Hotel in Baikonur, which serves as the quarantine quarters for men and women going to space.

This is to prevent any harmful bacteria or chemicals that could jeopardise the mission, the ISS or the crew they'll be joining at the space station.

It's less than 65 days to go until the Emirati astronaut blasts off to space on the Soyuz MS-15 for his eight-day journey. The few days leading up to the launch consist of several routines he or she must follow as part of Russia's space traditions and requirements.

Khaleej Times was in Baikonur over the weekend, covering the Soyuz MS-13 launch on July 20, which coincided with the 50th anniversary of Apollo 11, the moon-landing mission.

Speaking to the media, Luca Parmitano, the Italian astronaut on this mission, said: "It is an amazing coincidence that we are launching on a special day. Obviously, we do feel lucky that we can celebrate this event in such a glorious way."

The American astronaut, Andrew R Morgan, said: "What we do here is part of an international cooperation. And right now, we are completely focused on the mission ahead of us — to fly to the ISS based on international cooperation."

Astronauts and cosmonauts follow a tight schedule ahead of the launch, including putting flowers down in Moscow for the world's

SPACE FLIGHT TRADITIONS

- **Astronauts lay** flowers at the monument of Yuri Gagarin in Moscow
- **They plant** trees at Baikonur's Cosmonaut Grove
- **A Press** conference is held one day before liftoff

'FINAL MOMENTS' ON LAUNCH DAY

- **The astronaut** and cosmonaut sit behind a glass wall and put their space suits on
- **On the other** side of the wall, they see their families, officials and members of the Press
- **They walk** out and give a salute to a high-ranking official
- **They wave** to the public, media and family members
- **They get** on the bus that takes them to the launch site



Astronauts on the recent Soyuz MS-13 mission do a final public walk, give a salute to officials, and wave their goodbyes before the liftoff in Baikonur. — Photos by Sarwat Nasir



It's an amazing coincidence that we are launching on a special day (50th anniversary of moon-landing mission). We feel lucky."

Luca Parmitano, Italian astronaut

first man to go to space, Yuri Gagarin and planting trees at Baikonur's Cosmonaut Grove.

Saying goodbye

KT followed these astronauts on their scheduled tasks in Baikonur, including their last moments with their families before takeoff.

The astronaut and cosmonaut sit behind a glass wall and put their space suits on. The only people allowed on the other side are family members, officials and selected members of the Press. Right after, they have to walk out

and give a salute to a high-ranking official, usually the Roscosmos chief and the top engineer.

Then, they wave to the public, media and family members and get on the bus that takes them to the launch site.

It's this moment — aside from the actual liftoff — that often creates historic photographs: The astronaut waves a final goodbye to his or her emotional, but proud, young children and spouses from the window of the bus.

Previous photographs have shown family friends lifting the astronaut's

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Andrew R Morgan, American astronaut

wife or child on their shoulders so they can have a clearer, final look at their loved one going to space.

Even though the rate of space-related incidents is low, there remains an element of fear. On Parmitano's last mission in 2013, a water leak in his helmet nearly drowned him as he was carrying out a space walk.

On October 2018, the crew on the Soyuz MS-10 mission made a ballistic re-entry into Earth, after the boosters failed to separate properly.

Al Mansoori has already said he'll be taking a family photograph as one of the personal items the astro-

nauts are allowed to take on board the Soyuz. His biggest fan is also his nine-year-old daughter, who gives him a countdown to the launch on a daily basis. Earlier this month, he told KT: "My family is really excited and thrilled about my launch. They are counting down the days."

The family, officials and the media stand about 1.5km to 2km away from the launch site. The crew on the Soyuz MS-13 mission launched at 8.27pm (UAE time). Al Mansoori's liftoff time on September 25 is yet to be announced.

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COURT

Woman fined for sharing hubby's SMS

Ahmed Shaaban

RAS AL KHAIMAH — A woman has been ordered to pay a fine of Dh3,000 for sharing and copying text messages from her husband's mobile phone without his consent, as she suspected that he was having an "illicit affair".

The Ras Al Khaimah Misdemeanour Court also asked her to pay Dh100 in advocacy fees and other charges.

The court sent a copy of the case file to the public prosecution to interrogate the husband and the woman he was chatting with on social media.

The case unfolded when the husband lodged a complaint against his wife, accusing her of invading his privacy.

The public prosecution referred the case to the court where she admitted to the crime, but blamed her husband for having an "illicit affair" with a woman he used to text and talk with frequently. The suspicion had driven her to check his mobile phone, she pointed out.

"She was shocked and angry over the indecent texts and emojis sent to her husband by an unidentified woman, who told him that she 'loved' him," the wife's lawyer added.

"The husband refused any settlement, and so she had to attach the text messages — she copied from her husband's phone — to a lawsuit file."

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She was shocked and angry over the indecent texts and emojis sent to her husband by an unidentified woman."

Defence lawyer

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